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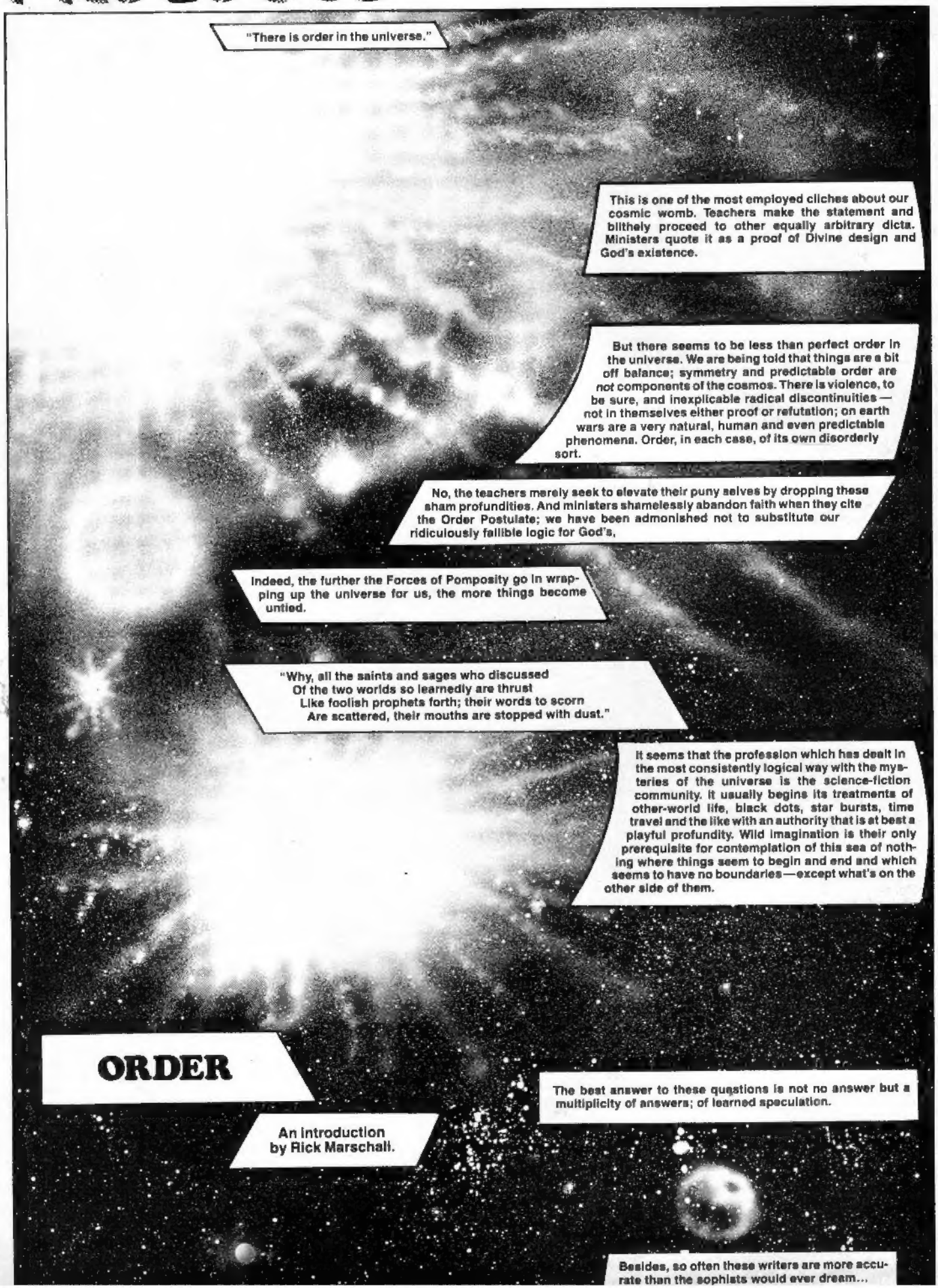
MARVEL PREVIEW
№14 $1
MARVEL PREVIEW PRESENTS
STAR-LORD™
A GALACTIC BATTLE TO THE DEATH-- AND THE PRIZE IS THE GIFT OF LIFE!
STAR-LORD'S GREATEST EPIC!

PROLOGUE


"There is order in the universe."
This is one of the most employed cliches about our cosmic womb. Teachers make the statement and blithely proceed to other equally arbitrary dicta. Ministers quote it as a proof of Divine design and God's existence.
But there seems to be less than perfect order in the universe. We are being told that things are a bit off balance; symmetry and predictable order are not components of the cosmos. There is violence, to be sure, and inexplicable radical discontinuities — not in themselves either proof or refutation; on earth wars are a very natural, human and even predictable phenomena. Order, in each case, of its own disorderly sort.
No, the teachers merely seek to elevate their puny selves by dropping these sham profundities. And ministers shamelessly abandon faith when they cite the Order Postulate; we have been admonished not to substitute our ridiculously fallible logic for God's.
Indeed, the further the Forces of Pomposity go in wrapping up the universe for us, the more things become untied.
"Why, all the saints and sages who discussed
Of the two worlds so learnedly are thrust
Like foolish prophets forth; their words to scorn
Are scattered, their mouths are stopped with dust."
It seems that the profession which has dealt in the most consistently logical way with the mysteries of the universe is the science-fiction community. It usually begins its treatments of other-world life, black dots, star bursts, time travel and the like with an authority that is at best a playful profundity. Wild imagination is their only prerequisite for contemplation of this sea of nothing where things seem to begin and end and which seems to have no boundaries—except what's on the other side of them.
ORDER
An introduction by Rick Marschall.
The best answer to these questions is not no answer but a multiplicity of answers; of learned speculation.
Besides, so often these writers are more accurate than the sophists would ever dream...

STAN LEE PRESENTS

STAR-LORD

Vol. 1 No. 14 Spring 1978

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MARVEL PREVIEW is published by MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT CO., INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION. 575 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. James E. Galton, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Published 4XYR. Copyright 1978 by Magazine Management Co., Inc. All rights reserved 575 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Vol. 1. No. 14 Spring 1978 issue. Price $1.00 per copy in the U.S. and Canada. All business inquiries should be addressed to Ed Shukin, Director of Circulation, 9th floor. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in the United States of America. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition.

Editorials

A TRILATERAL COMMISSION

The title above does not refer to the collection of international bankers and businessmen who jovially meet several times a year and plan how to run our lives; rather it suggests the assignment, a commission, made when this issue was conceived — an experiment in black and white.

We have three stories herein, each executed in a markedly different media and each approaching black and white comics with the respect the medium deserves. In the past many black and whites in the industry have been treated as color comics minus color. Some gray shades were thrown in gratuitously, often making the finished product muddier than it began, and — voila! — we had a black and white comic. After such a process its only saving characteristic was thematic. Half a loaf.

Marvel now thinks it's time to assert the artistic, as well as the thematic, integrity of the black and white medium. The varieties of tones and the potential for experimentation combine to give us — and you — a product whose luxury of moods, textures, effects and visual brilliance can easily match its polychromatic counterparts.

Our three stories in this issue of MARVEL PREVIEW offer comics rendered in pen and ink, in airbrush and in toned paper. Each presents a different approach. Star-Lord, becoming a classic character before our eyes (by the reliable yardsticks of sales figures and enthusiastic letters) in traditional pen, brush and ink (with untraditional Benday tones in dazzling varieties). Chris Claremont has taken the great science fiction creation and put him in a new situation, some new conflicts — emotional, as we'd expect of Chris' treatments, as well as physical — and new relationships. Readers are growing with the Star-Lord as he himself matures; Chris is working a very unique and special magic in his stellar series. And the growing legion of Star-Lord fans will be happy to hear that their huzzas have resulted in his being awarded his own book which will appear shortly as part of the new Marvel spectrum-color line. More anon and in other Marvel news sources.

New Vistas in Black and White

Our omnipresent and omnitalented David Anthony Kraft has contributed a unique SF tale, an other-world metaphor of fate and justice. To illustrate this black-and-white exercise we crossed the seas and assigned Welshman Bob Wakelin the enviable task of interpreting Dave's prose. To those not yet familiar with Mr. Wakelin — and we trust that familiarity will lead to the amazed admiration we feel — he is the fastest gun in the west when the gun in question is the main tool of the airbrusher's trade. The airbrush is a little instrument run by compressor and which sprays a nearly microscopic spray of ink. Photo retouchers use it; advertising and mechanical artists use it; and, at Marvel, it will soon be a stock in trade of comic colorists and embellishers. Wakelin's marvelous renderings should be regular fixtures in our new projects in the following months.

Close Encounters With Three Media

Your new editor has teamed up with the great Alfredo Alcala for a visual-novel format experiment in science-fiction terror. In the now-standard genre of "What If S-F and Real People Contacts," we present "Detour" that provides a contrast to the more exotic themes and visuals of this issue's other offerings. Alfredo has used the medium of chemical-toned paper — developed and mastered by Roy Crane in the strip world — to achieve effects of shadow, texture and tone..

The commission — a charge to three teams to exploit the seemingly restrictive black-and-white medium — has been made and executed splendidly. I hope you'll agree.

Somewhere Over the Color Rainbow

By the way, in this premiere issue under Marschall's tutelage I think it appropriate to explain myself to long-time Marvel readers. I have been a comics editor at three newspaper syndicates and have contributed to more than a dozen books on comics history; my own book, **The Sunday Funnies,** will be published in October 1978 by Chelsea House. As a student of and sometime contributor to European comics projects, I have long been impressed with the formats, concepts and mature treatments given the comic-strip art form over there for the past decade. Most notably their use of color has been innovative and full camera separation has been used — making American screened color books often look pale by comparison.

When I was told by Publisher Stan Lee and Editor in Chief Jim Shooter that Marvel Comics Group was contemplating experimentation in this format, my interest was piqued — to understate the case. To make a long story short, Marvel has committed itself to a new line of special color books that should make the industry absolutely fall over and, needless to say, excite readers to the possibilities of better paper, more pages, no ads, brilliant full spectrum color, and more mature storylines. Ralph Macchio and I are fashioning a line of new titles — and the best titles of the old black-and-white line — to offer some of the most innovative comics formats in years. Hope you're with us.

Black-and-white lives — better than ever — but watch out for the Color Colossus!

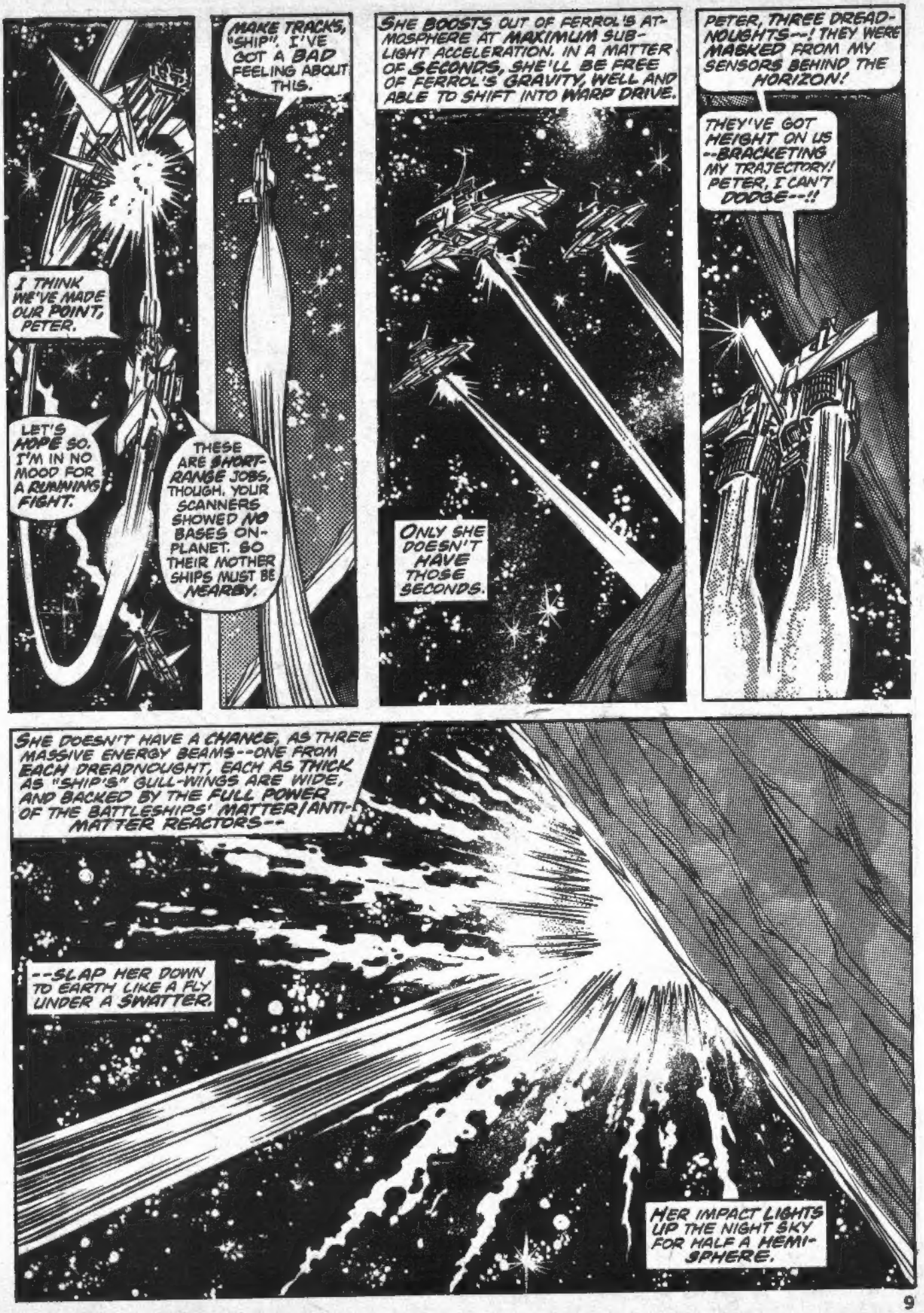
Richard Marschall

PROLOGUE:
THE WORLD IS A DESERT. FROM POLE TO POLE, IT IS MILE AFTER ENDLESS MILE OF SAND--AN EVER-SHIFTING, DUN-COLORED CANVAS STRETCHED BENEATH AN AZURE SKY.
IT'S A WORLD OF ABSOLUTES: SO PEACEFUL THAT ONE MIGHT THINK THIS WAS HOW THE UNIVERSE LOOKED AT THE INSTANT BEFORE CREATION.
AND YET, A MOMENT LATER, THAT PEACE COULD BE BROKEN BY A CYCLONIC DUSTSTORM SO POWERFUL IT CAN SHATTER TRICARDIAN STEEL INTO DUST.
IT'S AN UNFORGIVING WORLD, MADE ALL THE MORE DEADLY BY THE FACT THAT A MAN COULD EASILY PERSUADE HIMSELF THAT HE COULD SURVIVE HERE.
HE WOULD BE WRONG.

WELCOME TO FERROL, STARLORD!
WHAT THE HELL--?!?

COMPANY, PETER!
A SQUADRON OF STARFIGHTERS, DROPPING IN FROM A LOW ORBIT. THEIR DESIGN'S UNFAMILIAR, BUT THEIR WEAPONRY IS A MIX OF BASIC ENERGY BLASTERS AND NUCLEAR MISSILES.
SO FAR, MY SHIELDS ARE COPING, BUT I CAN'T HANDLE THIS AMOUNT OF PRESSURE INDEFINITELY.

HEY, "SHIP", D'YOU GET THE FEELING WE'RE NOT WELCOME HERE?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. ANY SUGGESTIONS?
ONLY THE OBVIOUS. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY. HOLD TIGHT, BOYO!
IMPOSSIBLY, THE GREAT, GULL-WINGED STAR-SHIP STOPS...
...GOING FROM HYPERSONIC SPEEDS TO DEAD IN SPACE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THE FIGHTERS ON HER TAIL OVER-SHOOTING HER BEFORE THEIR PILOTS HAVE EVEN BEGUN TO REALIZE WHAT'S HAPPENED.
AND BY THE TIME THEY HAVE, IT'S TOO LATE.
...RESHAPING HER STAN-DARD EXPLORATORY CONFIGURATION INTO SOMETHING FAR DEADLIER: A SIKH'AAR GUNSHIP.
"SHIP'S" ORGANIC STEEL HULL IS ALREADY FLOWING LIKE WATER A-ROUND THE COMMAND SPHERE...
AS THE STARFIGHTER SQUADRON FRANTICALLY TRIES TO REGROUP AROUND HER, "SHIP" STRIKES...
...EACH OF HER ENERGY CANNON SIGHTINGS ON A DIFFERENT TARGET, EACH SALVO HITTING HOME. IN LESS THAN A MINUTE, THE STARFIGHTERS HAVE BEEN ROUTED.


I THINK WE'VE MADE OUR POINT, PETER.
LET'S HOPE SO. I'M IN NO MOOD FOR A RUNNING FIGHT.
MAKE TRACKS, "SHIP". I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
THESE ARE SHORT-RANGE JOBS, THOUGH. YOUR SCANNERS SHOWED NO BASES ON-PLANET. SO THEIR MOTHER SHIPS MUST BE NEARBY.
SHE BOOSTS OUT OF FERROL'S ATMOSPHERE AT MAXIMUM SUB-LIGHT ACCELERATION. IN A MATTER OF SECONDS, SHE'LL BE FREE OF FERROL'S GRAVITY WELL AND ABLE TO SHIFT INTO WARP DRIVE.
ONLY SHE DOESN'T HAVE THOSE SECONDS.
PETER, THREE DREADNOUGHTS--! THEY WERE MASKED FROM MY SENSORS BEHIND THE HORIZON!
THEY'VE GOT HEIGHT ON US --BRACKETING MY TRAJECTORY! PETER, I CAN'T DODGE--!!
SHE DOESN'T HAVE A CHANCE, AS THREE MASSIVE ENERGY BEAMS--ONE FROM EACH DREADNOUGHT, EACH AS THICK AS "SHIP'S" GULL-WINGS ARE WIDE, AND BACKED BY THE FULL POWER OF THE BATTLESHIPS' MATTER/ANTI-MATTER REACTORS--
--SLAP HER DOWN TO EARTH LIKE A FLY UNDER A SWATTER.
HER IMPACT LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT SKY FOR HALF A HEMI-SPHERE.

SANDSONG
by
CHRIS CLAREMONT
&
CARMINE INFANTINO
HE WAS BORN PETER JASON QUILL AND, ONCE UPON A TIME, HE INHERITED THE UNIVERSE.
HE WANTED TO BECOME AN ASTRONAUT MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD, AND INSTEAD BECAME STAR-LORD. MASTER OF LANGUAGES, OF ALL THINGS MECHANICAL, OF THE PRIMAL ELEMENTS OF LIFE: EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND WATER.
SINCE THEN, HE'S ROAMED THE GALAXIES, EVER-CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND THE FARTHEST STAR. HE'S SEEN WONDERS HIS FELLOW MEN HAVEN'T EVEN DREAMED OF, AND, ALONG THE WAY, BECOME SOMETHING OF A LEGEND.
NONE OF WHICH MATTERS A DAMN RIGHT NOW, AS HE LIES FACE-DOWN AND UNMOVING ON THE FACE OF A DUNE JUST NORTH OF FERROL'S EQUATOR. BECAUSE HERE, PERHAPS, IS WHERE THE LEGEND ENDS.
HERE IS WHERE PETER QUILL, STAR-LORD, DIES.

Inks: Bob Wiacek Calligraphy and Title Design: Annette Kawecki

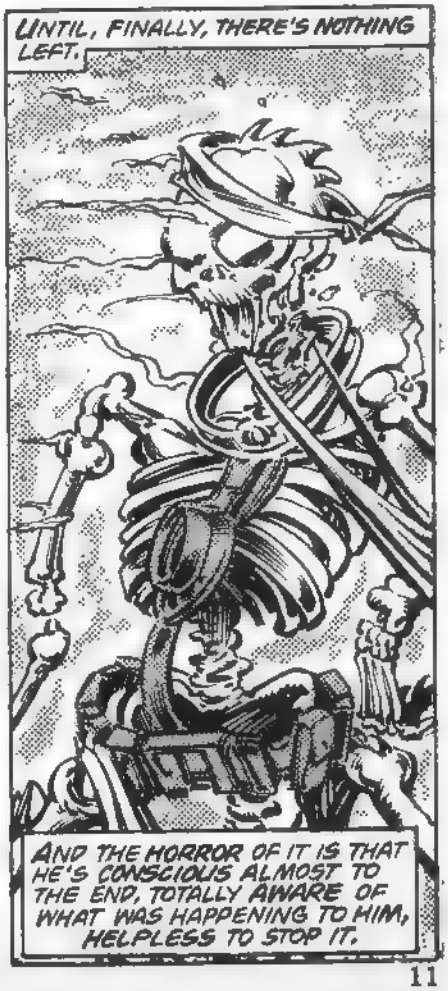
THOU--!!
MAMMAL, DOST THOU LIVE?! A HALF-DOZEN OF MY CLAN-BROTHERS--THE FINEST WARRIORS-PRIME IN THE LORQ FLEET--HAST THOU AND THY DEMON-SHIP SLAIN--
--YET THOU DOST LIVE?!?

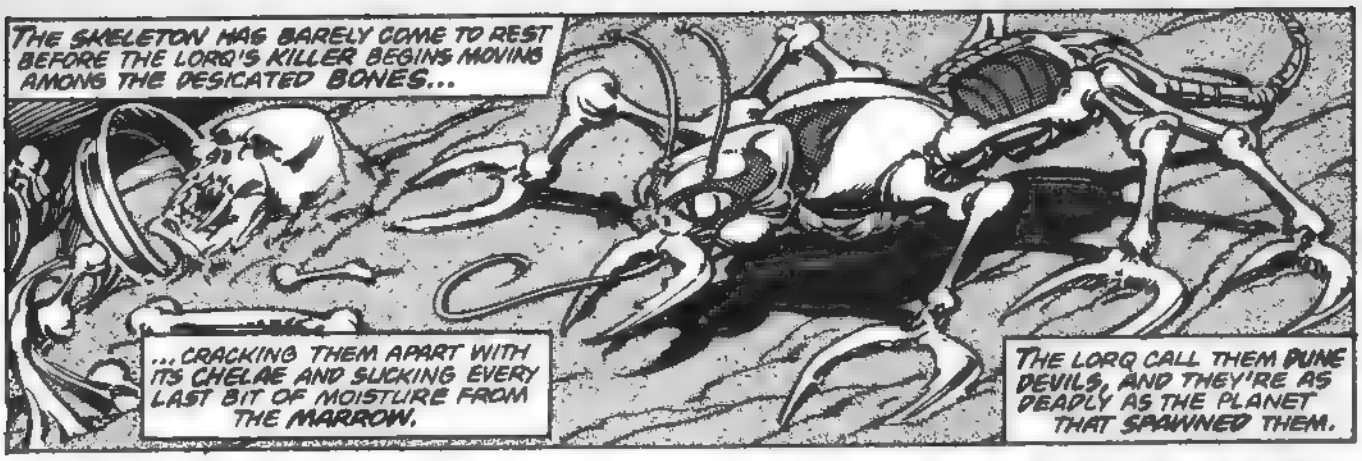
MY BLAZER WILL REMEDY THAT.
NAY! THAT IS TOO QUICK A DEATH FOR THEE. I HAVE A BETTER WAY.

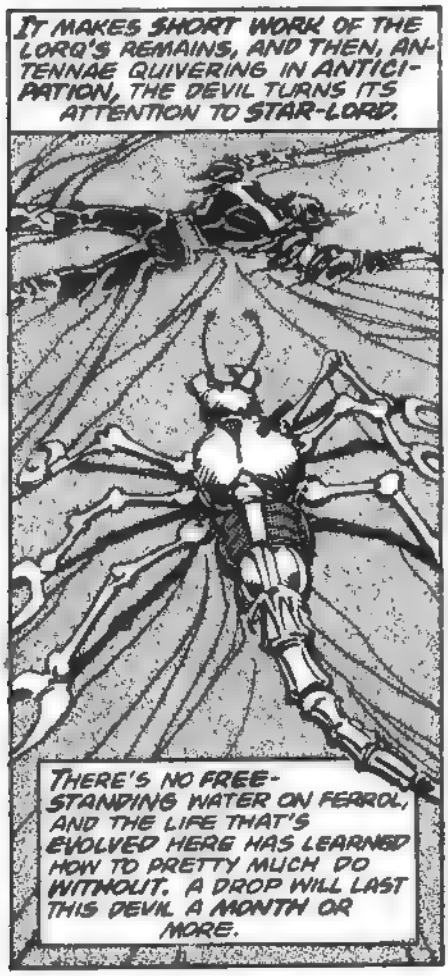
THOU SHALT DIE AS MY BROTHERS DIED, CONSUMED BY THIS DUSTBALL HELL-WORLD.
THE SUN WILL BE UP SOON, MAMMAL, AND WHEN IT'S RAYS TOUCH THEE, THY BLOOD WILL BOIL AND THY FLESH WITHER INTO...
>URK--?!?<

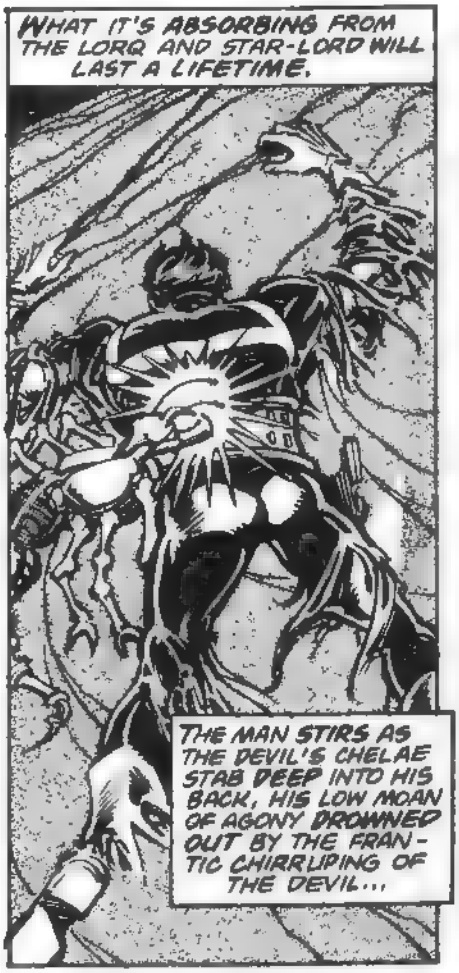
BY THE GREAT NEST--N-NO...!
P-PLEASE.
IT'S OVER QUICKLY...

...AS THE END THE LORQ COMMANDER WISHED FOR STAR-LORD COMES FOR HIM INSTEAD. FLESH DRAWS DRUMHEAD TIGHT OVER BONE AS ALL THE MOISTURE IN THE LORQ'S BODY IS REMORSELESSLY DRAINED AWAY.
THEN, LIKE BRITTLE PARCHMENT, IT BEGINS TO CRUMBLE.


UNTIL, FINALLY, THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.
AND THE HORROR OF IT IS THAT HE'S CONSCIOUS ALMOST TO THE END, TOTALLY AWARE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO HIM, HELPLESS TO STOP IT.


THE SKELETON HAS BARELY COME TO REST BEFORE THE LORQ'S KILLER BEGINS MOVING AMONG THE DESICATED BONES...
...CRACKING THEM APART WITH ITS CHELAE AND SUCKING EVERY LAST BIT OF MOISTURE FROM THE MARROW.
THE LORQ CALL THEM DUNE DEVILS, AND THEY'RE AS DEADLY AS THE PLANET THAT SPAWNED THEM.


IT MAKES SHORT WORK OF THE LORQ'S REMAINS, AND THEN, ANTENNAE QUIVERING IN ANTICIPATION, THE DEVIL TURNS ITS ATTENTION TO STAR-LORD.
THERE'S NO FREE-STANDING WATER ON FERROL, AND THE LIFE THAT'S EVOLVED HERE HAS LEARNED HOW TO PRETTY MUCH DO WITHOUT. A DROP WILL LAST THIS DEVIL A MONTH OR MORE.


WHAT IT'S ABSORBING FROM THE LORQ AND STAR-LORD WILL LAST A LIFETIME.
THE MAN STIRS AS THE DEVIL'S CHELAE STAB DEEP INTO HIS BACK, HIS LOW MOAN OF AGONY DROWNED OUT BY THE FRANTIC CHIRRUPING OF THE DEVIL...

...AS ITS SENSES ARE SWAMPED BY THE ORGIASTIC PLEASURE OF ITS FEEDING. STAR-LORD'S SKIN BEGINS TO CRACK AND BLISTER. IN SECONDS HE'LL BE NO MORE...
SKARK!
DAMN YOU, DEMON--LET HIM ALONE!

BEHIND THE DUNE DEVIL, THE GROUND BEGINS TO SHUDDER--ALMOST AS IF IT WERE BEING HIT BY A MINOR EARTHQUAKE--
--AND "SHIP" LIFTS HERSELF FREE OF THE DESERT'S EMBRACE.
STAR-LORD?! STAR-LORD?!?
I PRAY I'M NOT TOO LATE.

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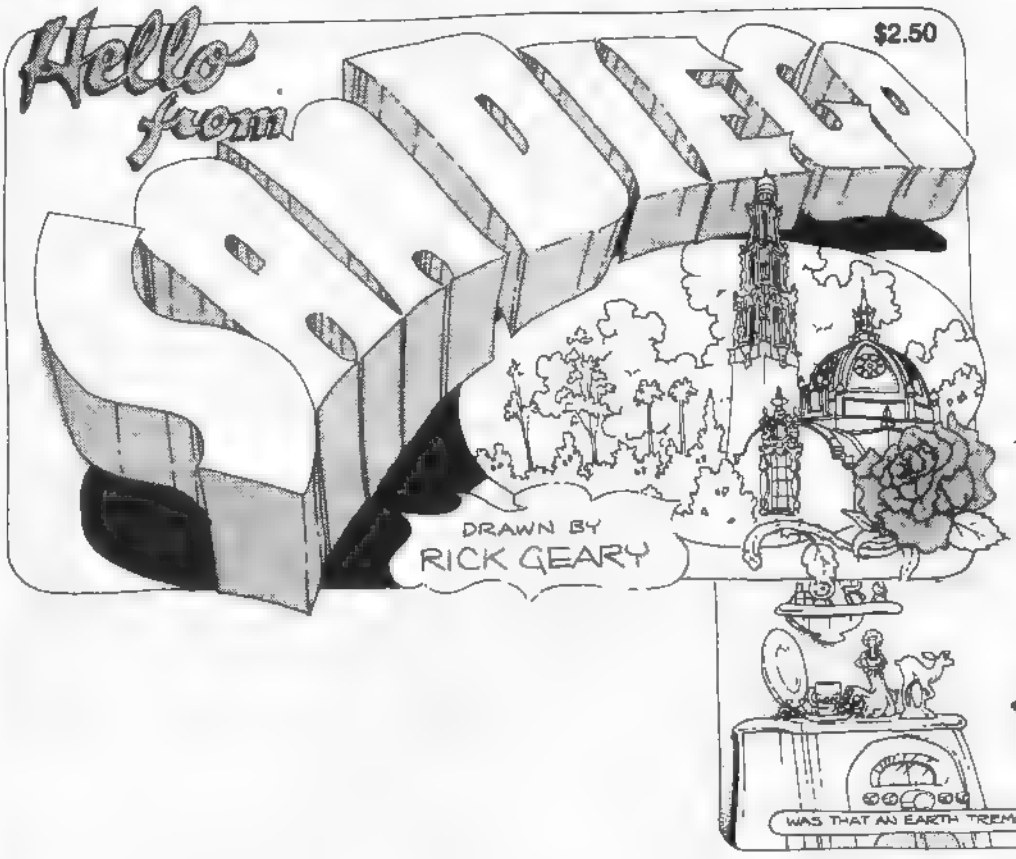

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OKAY, WIDGETS, GO GET HIM!
I FEEL SO DAMN HELPLESS! ON-BOARD SENSORS ARE IN-OPERATIVE...
...AND IT'S TAKING ALMOST ALL MY POWER JUST TO KEEP THOSE TWO WIDGETS FLYING. I DON'T DARE DIVERT ANY TO THEIR SENSOR PACKS.
BRING HIM ABOARD, LITTLE ONES. QUICKLY!
OH, PETER, YOU LOOK AS AWFUL AS I FEEL. BUT AT LEAST YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.
WE'RE BOTH LUCKIER THAN WE DESERVE, BOYO. NO SHIP BUILT BY MAN COULD HAVE SURVIVED THAT DREADNOUGHT BLASTER ATTACK.
GOOD THING I WASN'T BUILT, HM? EVEN SO, THEY CAME AS CLOSE TO ENDING ME--TO ENDING US, M'LOVE--AS I EVER WANT TO COME.
WHATEVER'S GOING ON HERE, PETER--WHATEVER MESS YOUR CURIOSITY'S GOTTEN US INTO--THE BEINGS INVOLVED ARE PLAYING FOR KEEPS.
USING THE WIDGETS DRAINED MORE POWER THAN I THOUGHT. I SHOULD REST, BUILD UP MY RESERVES.
IF I DO, THOUGH, PETER'S A DEAD MAN.
HIS INJURIES WERE TERMINAL EVEN BEFORE THAT SIX-LEGGED NIGHTMARE GOT TO HIM. NOW SOME OF HIS LIFE-SIGNS ARE SO LOW THEY'RE BARELY REGISTERING.
A LOT OF BROKEN BONES--THEY'LL HAVE TO BE SET--MASSIVE INTERNAL TRAUMA. IT'S MORE DAMAGE THAN THE LIFE SUPPORT CELL ALONE CAN HANDLE.
FIRST THINGS FIRST. I'VE GOT TO GET HIS UNIFORM OFF, THEN USE THE WIDGETS TO OPERATE.
DAMN!
ALL THIS TIME WORRYING ABOUT STAR-LORD, I'VE FORGOTTEN I'M HURT MYSELF.
KRAKOW!
MY CONTROL OVER THE WIDGETS COMES AND GOES; I CAN'T DEPEND ON THEM TO WORK ON PETER. BUT WITHOUT THEM, I HAVE NO HANDS! I CAN'T OPERATE...I CAN'T DO A BLASTED THING.

WAIT A MINUTE--! WHO SAYS THE WIDGETS ARE MY ONLY HOPE?!
THEY'RE MERELY EXTENSIONS OF MY 'SELF', ANIMATED BY MY POWER.
IF I CAN CREATE THEM, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FACSIMILE SOMETHING LARGER...MORE COMPLEX...
MATERIALS ARE NO PROBLEM. I'LL SIMPLY EXTRUDE WHAT I NEED FROM MY BASIC MASS.
I'LL LEAVE ENOUGH OF MY CONSCIOUSNESS BEHIND TO MAINTAIN THE HEALING PROCESS...
...AND TRANSFER THE REST TO THIS NEW FORM. FROM OBSERVING PETER, I THINK A HUMANOID PHYSIOGNOMY WILL WORK THE BEST.
WHOUUU--!! THIS ISN'T TURNING OUT ...TO BE AS EASY... AS I THOUGHT.
SHAPING A BODY IS ONE THING. MIND-SHIFTING INTO IT IS SOMETHING ELSE.
I'VE NEVER TRIED...SOMETHING LIKE THIS BEFORE...
...AND WITH MY POWER LEVELS SO LOW, I HAVE NO MARGIN FOR ERROR. EVEN THE SLIGHTEST MISTAKE WILL... FINISH ME.
I... I THINK-- YES!
I'VE DONE IT!!
EVERYTHING'S...SO QUIET. AND IT ALL LOOKS SO DIFFERENT. I FEEL LIKE A NEW-BORN CHILD. I FEEL...SCARED.
AND THIS NEW BODY DOESN'T HELP MY PEACE OF MIND MUCH. IT'S A MASTERPIECE OF DESIGN EFFICIENCY...
...AND IT LOOKS AWFUL.
I'VE COME THIS FAR. I MIGHT AS WELL GO ALL THE WAY. BESIDES, THE POWER NEEDED FOR COSMETIC MODIFICATIONS IS NEGLIGIBLE.

VOILA!
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I FEEL BETTER ALREADY.
I MUST ADMIT, I'VE DONE MYSELF PROUD.
AND YET... I WONDER IF PETER WILL FIND ME ATTRACTIVE?
SHAAA--! WHAT AM I THINKING?!
EVEN IF HE DID, WHAT COULD COME OF IT? DESPITE APPEARANCES, MY SOUL STILL WEARS A MECHANOID FORM...
UNNNNNHH!
PETER! WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?! WORRYING ABOUT NONESSENTIALS WHILE MY MAN LIES DYING!
GOOD THING MY MEMORIES CAME WITH ME IN THE MIND-SHIFT--I WASN'T SURE THEY WOULD. I'LL NEED EVERY SCRAP OF MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE THEY CONTAIN IF PETER'S TO BE SAVED.
THE LIFE-CELL HAS STABILIZED HIS CONDITION, BUT HE'S DEEP IN A SHOCK-INDUCED COMA.
NO BRAIN DAMAGE, BUT THAT COULD CHANGE ANYTIME. I'D BETTER GET TO WORK.
I'VE GOT A HELLUVA LOT TO DO AND PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO DO IT.

DARKNESS. SILENCE. PEACE.
PETER QUILL KNOWS NOTHING OF PEACE.
HE'S FOUGHT ALL HIS LIFE.
BUT NEVER HARDER THAN NOW, FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE.
THERE'S PAIN AS HE STRUGGLES BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT HE IGNORES IT.
THERE'S A VOICE SPEAKING GIB-BERISH, AND A SHAPE LOOMING OVER HIM...
...THAT RESOLVES ITSELF INTO A WOMAN.
HELLO, STAR-LORD. HOW DO YOU FEEL?
I'VE FELT...BETTER, BUT WHO ARE YOU? SHIP, WHO'S THIS WOMAN?
HEY! I'M NAKED!
OF COURSE.

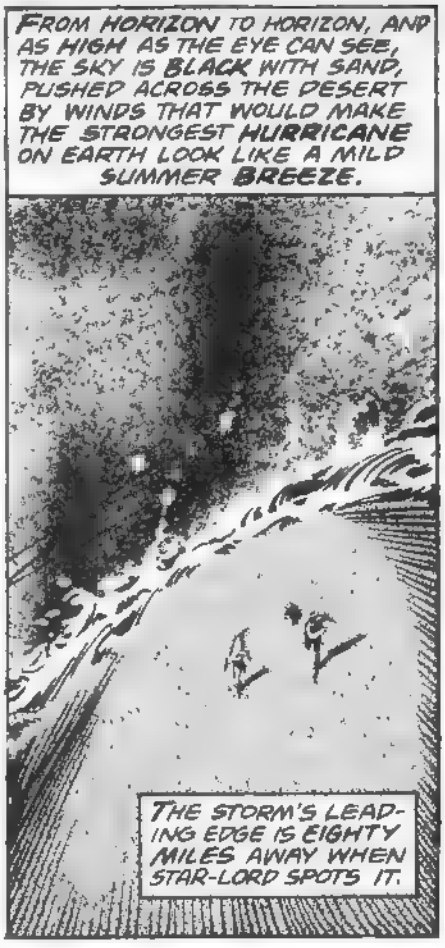
SHIP! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?! SHIP?!?
SHE WON'T ANSWER, STAR-LORD. SHE CAN'T.
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT SUPPOSED MEAN?!
HE--DOESN'T RECOG-NIZE ME. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS, ALMOST IN A STATE OF PANIC.
STRANGE, PART OF ME IS DISAP-POINTED-- SOME-HOW, I THOUGHT HE'D KNOW ME IN ANY GUISE. YET PART OF ME IS AMUSED.
YOUR SHIP WAS BADLY DAMAGED, STAR-LORD.
I...REMEMBER. WE WERE ATTACKED. I THOUGHT WE WERE DONE FOR.
WHEN THOSE BEAMS HIT US...
...SHE--SHIP!--SHE SCREAMED.
AND WHY NOT? IN MY OWN WAY, I AM AS MUCH A LIVING BEING AS YOU.
I AM CALLED CARYTH HALYAN. IS 'STAR-LORD' YOUR ONLY NAME?
UH, NO. I'M PETER QUILL. PARDON MY ASKING, BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I'M AN EXPLORER--MUCH LIKE YOURSELF. AND, LIKE YOU, I WAS AMBUSHED.
I SAW YOU CRASH, SO I PROGRAMMED MY ESCAPE POD TO LAND NEARBY. WHEN I FOUND YOUR SHIP, IT WAS SHIFTING INTO HIBERNATION MODE, DIVERTING ALL ITS POWER--SAVE THAT NEEDED IN THE MEDICAL SECTION--TO ITS OWN REPAIR.
TELEMETRY CONFIRMS YOUR STORY, MS. HALYAN. LOOKS LIKE I'M ON MY OWN FOR A WHILE.
DID, UH, YOU FIX ME UP?
I HAVE SOME SMALL SKILL AS A PHYSICIAN. I WAS GLAD TO BE OF HELP.
I'M IMPRESSED, AND VERY GRATEFUL.
WHAT THE--?!
STAR-LORD, IS IT AN EARTH-QUAKE?!
NO, IT'S AN AIR TREMOR. C'MON, LET'S GO SEE WHAT'S UP.
LOOK AT 'EM, WILLYA?
EACH SHIP MUST BE A COUPLE OF KLICKS LONG.
THOSE ARE THE BASTARDS WHO ALMOST FINISHED ME AND "SHIP".
THEY'RE CHEWING UP THE HORIZON WITH LASER CANNONS. LOOKING FOR US, I WONDER...OR SOMETHING ELSE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I'M NOT QUITE SURE. BUT I'M GOING TO FIND OUT.
NO, STAR-LORD.
WE ARE GOING TO FIND OUT.

DAWN.
THEY'VE BEEN MOVING DUE WEST ALONG FERROL'S EQUATOR SINCE LEAVING "SHIP" THE NIGHT BEFORE. FROM THE FIRST, STAR-LORD SETS A BRUTAL PACE ...ONE THAT SEEMS TO MATCH HIS MOOD.
HIS WOUNDS ARE HEALING WITH REMARKABLE SPEED, BUT HE'S STILL IN PAIN MUCH OF THE TIME, AND IT CHAFES HIM NOT TO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO FLY.
TO HIS SURPRISE, HIS LADY COMPANION DOESN'T FALL BEHIND. IF ANYTHING, SHE SEEMS TO BE ENJOYING HERSELF.
ABOUT MID-MORNING, STAR-LORD CALLS A HALT. THE SUN IS ALREADY HIGH AND THERE'S NO SHADE, THE SAND AROUND THEM REFLECTING THE SUNLIGHT LIKE A BRILLIANT, POLISHED MIRROR.
THE AIR IS DRY, THE HEAT ENVELOPING THEM LIKE A LIVING THING.
I THOUGHT I'D SEEN DESERTS BEFORE, BUT THIS--?! AN AVERAGE MAN WOULDN'T LAST A HALF-HOUR IN THIS HELL.
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
TELL ME, MY FRIEND, MUST YOU ALWAYS WEAR THAT HELMET?
IT CAME WITH THE UNIFORM. AT THE TIME, IT DIDN'T SEEM POLITIC TO OBJECT.
WELL, I THINK IT'S HIDEOUS.
AH. IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE AN IMPROVEMENT?
AT LEAST NOW I CAN SEE YOUR FACE.
IT'S A VERY NICE FACE, PETER QUILL. YOU SHOULD LET PEOPLE SEE IT MORE OFTEN.
OR IS IT THAT YOU LIKE HIDING BEHIND A MASK?
MS. HALYAN, WHAT I LIKE OR DISLIKE-- WHAT I AM OR AM NOT-- IS NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS!
I SEE.
I HOPE SO. LET'S GET MOVING.

THE REST OF THE DAY PASSES PRETTY MUCH IN SILENCE. BY LATE AFTERNOON, THEY'VE REACHED THEIR GOAL.
WE SPOTTED IT FROM ORBIT--A MESA, MORE THAN THREE KILOMETERS HIGH, THE ONLY PIECE OF ROCK IN THIS DESERT FOR SIX THOUSAND KILOMETERS IN ANY DIRECTION.
WE WERE TEN PARSECS OUT FROM FERROL'S SYSTEM WHEN I HEARD THE CALL. ODDLY ENOUGH, "SHIP" HEARD NOTHING.
IT WAS A MASS OF CONTRADICTIONS: ONE VOICE, BUT MANY; ANCIENT, BUT YOUTHFUL; POWERFUL BEYOND IMAGINING, YET IN DESPERATE NEED OF HELP...
THE CALL LED "SHIP" AND ME TO FERROL. AND NOW IT'S LED ME HERE.
STAR-LORD, I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE NEAREST MOUNTAINS WERE HALFWAY 'ROUND THE WORLD.
THEY ARE.
THEN WHAT'S THAT ALONG THE HORIZON?
HELL AND DAMNATION! THE SENSOR LIMITS OF THIS BODY ARE BEGINNING TO DRIVE ME BATTY!
MY OPTICS ARE FUNCTIONING AT MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY...
...AND I CAN'T SEE A THING!
CAN'T TELL MUCH FROM THE GROUND, ESPECIALLY AGAINST THE DUSK.
STAR-LORD, COME DOWN! YOU'RE STILL TOO WEAK TO FLY!
WHAA-??
COULDN'T MAINTAIN... CONCENTRATION... STAY ALOFT...
DON'T WORRY, BOYO. I'VE GOT YOU.

FUNNY. YOU SOUND LIKE A SHIP I USED TO KNOW.
YOUR STAR-SHIP? I DON'T SEE HOW SHE EVER PUT UP WITH YOU.
WHY THE PANIC, STAR-LORD? WHAT DID YOU SEE?
A DUST STORM, LADY


FROM HORIZON TO HORIZON, AND AS HIGH AS THE EYE CAN SEE, THE SKY IS BLACK WITH SAND, PUSHED ACROSS THE DESERT BY WINDS THAT WOULD MAKE THE STRONGEST HURRICANE ON EARTH LOOK LIKE A MILD SUMMER BREEZE.
THE STORM'S LEADING EDGE IS EIGHTY MILES AWAY WHEN STAR-LORD SPOTS IT.

EVEN SO, IT'S ON THEM BEFORE THEY'VE COVERED HALF THE DISTANCE TO THE MESA.
IT'S A MIRACLE THAT NEITHER TRIPS AS THE WIND SEEMS TO PICK THEM UP AND HURRY THEM ALONG. THE OTHER WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STOP AND GO BACK.

THE SAND TEARS AT THEM LIKE KNIVES WITH FORCE ENOUGH TO SHRED A MAN APART. IT'S ALMOST MORE THAN STAR-LORD CAN STAND AS THEY SCRAMBLE UP THE ESCARPMENT TOWARDS A FISSURE HE'D SPOTTED.
HE WONDERS HOW CARYTH MANAGES TO COME THROUGH IT ALL SEEMINGLY UNTOUCHED.
HE HAS A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS WOMAN. AT TIMES, SHE SEEMS SO DAMNABLY FAMILIAR...

BUT, FOR THE MOMENT, HIS QUESTIONS CAN WAIT.
MADE IT!
JUST IN TIME, TOO. I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH MORE OF THAT STORM I COULD HAVE TAKEN.
YOU LOOK ALL RIGHT TO ME.
IF YOU SAY SO, PETER.

YEAH. LOOK AT IT, CARYTH--ALL THAT... POWER. NO MORE THAN ATMOSPHERE MOVING OVER SOIL, YET IT DWARFS ALMOST ALL THE WORKS OF MAN.
AT OUR BEST, ALL WE EVER DO IS MIMIC NATURE. AND THAT, BADLY.
AND THIS STORM IS NO-THING LIKE I'VE SEEN IN SPACE.
I SOMETIMES ASK MYSELF WHY I DON'T MISS EARTH--MY HOMEWORLD. I THINK IT'S BECAUSE ...IT WAS NEVER MY HOME. I LIVED THERE, BUT I HAD NO ROOTS, NOTHING I REALLY WANTED TO REMEMBER.
I DIDN'T BELONG. I DIDN'T WANT TO BELONG.
OH, PETER. AM I SUCH A FOOL, TO KNOW YOU FOR SO LONG, YET NOT KNOW YOU AT ALL?!
CARYTH, WHAT--?!
HUSH.
IS YOUR ONLY JOY AS STAR-LORD TO EXPERIENCE THE PHYSICAL WONDERS OF EX-ISTENCE, BUT NOT THE PEOPLES WHO ARE A PART OF THEM?
HOW CAN ANYONE BEAR TO LIVE HIS LIFE IN SUCH UTTER LONELINESS...?
EVEN IF I WERE NO MORE THAN A STAR-SHIP, I WOULD BE MORE ALIVE THAN THAT.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE DOING THIS, LADY--AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, I DON'T CARE.
SOMETHING ABOUT YOU, CARYTH-- I NEED...
WHAT HAVE I DONE?!
EMOTIONS--IN HIM, MOSTLY IN ME!?! SO MANY SENSATIONS--ON SO MANY LEVELS--COMING TOO FAST. I CAN'T COPE! I WANT HIM SO MUCH--BUT I CAN'T HAVE HIM!
NO!!
CARYTH?!
I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN--!
DON'T RUN AWAY--- I WON'T HURT YOU! CARYTH, I'M SORRY!

WELL, QUILL, YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN. SOMEONE REACHES OUT TO YOU, AND ALL YOU CAN DO IS BUST 'EM IN THE CHOPS.
DAMN YOU, WOMAN--WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?!
I DID ALL RIGHT TILL I MET YOU! NOW I'M GOING CRAZIER BY THE MINUTE.
I HAVE NO DEFENSES AGAINST HER. AND PART OF ME ISN'T SURE IT WANTS ANY.
STAR-LORD!
CARYTH'S VOICE--SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE!
HANG ON, LADY! I'M COMING!
WATCH YOUR STEP, PETER. THE PATH MAKES A SHARP TURN UP HERE.
GOOD LORD!
I THOUGHT THIS WAS A SHALLOW FISSURE, BUT IT OPENS INTO A REAL CAVE.

MORE THAN THAT. THE HEART OF THIS MESA SEEMS TO BE HOLLOW. I DROPPED A STONE. IT HASN'T HIT BOTTOM YET.
THE LEDGE SPIRALS DOWN THE WALL. WANT TO SEE WHERE IT LEADS?
I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK.
THEY HADN'T GONE FAR WHEN...
TREMOR! A BIG ONE!
PETER--THE LEDGE! IT'S DISINTE-GRATING!
GRAB MY HAND, CARYTH! I'LL TRY TO BRAKE OUR FALL!
WHOUUFF!
NOT MY FINEST LAND-ING, BUT LIKE THE SAYING GOES: ANY ONE YOU CAN WALK A-WAY FROM...
...HANG ON A MINUTE. I'LL GET US SOME LIGHT.

LOGOS
IN A SMOOTH, FLUID MOTION, STAR-LORD DRAWS HIS WEAPON, FOCUSES HIS WILL, AND FIRES. NEITHER HE NOR CARYTH HAVE WORDS FOR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT...
. AS THE AIR AROUND THEM LITERALLY EXPLODES WITH LIGHT.
THE CAVERN IS CRYSTAL. MAN-SIZED FACETS ARE LAYERED UP AND AWAY FROM THEM ON ALL SIDES, THEIR GLEAMING SURFACES MARRED HERE AND THERE BY PATCHES OF IRIDESCENT LICHEN, PROVIDING ILLUMINATION WHEN THE GLOW FROM STAR LORD'S WEAPON FADES.
THEY'RE IN A VAST, CATHEDRAL-LIKE CAVERN, STANDING ATOP A GENTLE-SLOPED MOUND SET HARD BY ONE WALL.
AN IMAGE COMES TO STAR-LORD'S MIND--THAT HE AND CARYTH ARE IN THE HEART OF A DIAMOND, AND THAT THE DIAMOND IS ALIVE.
THERE'S A FEELING OF PEACE AND SERENITY HE'S RARELY FELT BEFORE, AND HE KNOWS, INSTINCTIVELY, THAT HE STANDS IN A HOLY PLACE.

DO YOU FEEL IT, PETER? I SENSE LIFE HERE... AND THE...BEAUTY OF IT...
I KNOW. IT'S LIKE THE CALL THAT BROUGHT ME AND "SHIP" TO FERROL. THE SAME CONTRADICTORY COLORS BURSTING IN MY HEAD.
SO CLOSE IT HURTS--YET STILL JUST OUT OF REACH.
SPEAKING IN WHISPERS, THEIR FACES TOUCHED WITH AWE, THEY BEGIN EXPLORING THE GREAT CAVERN. AT TIMES, IT'S AS IF THEY'RE NO LONGER ON FERROL AT ALL, BUT FLOATING IN AN ENDLESS SEA OF LIGHT AND COLOR.
BUT THEN, THE MOOD IS BROKEN AS BOTH REALIZE THAT MANY OF THE CRYSTAL FACETS HAVE BEEN FASHIONED..
...THAT THE EARTHEN FLOOR HAS BEEN POUNDED FAR TOO FLAT TO BE NATURAL...
...THAT THEY MIGHT NOT BE ALONE.
THEY SEPARATE, EACH TAKING OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE CATHEDRAL, CHECKING THE SHADOWLESS MIRROR-WALLS FOR A WAY OUT.

IT PROVES TO BE EASIER SAID THAN DONE.
THE CRYSTALS ARE PERFECT REFLECTORS. THEY'RE SCRAMBLING MY SENSORS, CHOPPING ME BACK TO BASIC HUMAN INPUT LEVELS.
WHICH, FOR ME, IS THE NEXT BEST THING TO BEING DEAF, DUMB, BLIND AND LOCKED IN A BOX--WHAT WAS THAT?!?
I'LL FOCUS MY SYSTEMS AS TIGHT AS THEY'LL GO, TRY TO PUNCH THROUGH THE STATIC...
NO OPENINGS ON GROUND LEVEL. LOOKS LIKE OUR ONLY CHANCE IS FOR ME TO FLY US OUT. AND I'M NOT SURE I CAN--EH?!?
PETER! I TRACKED MOVEMENT HALFWAY UP THE CRYSTAL FACE. WE'VE GOT COMPANY--
--AND I THINK WE'VE GOT TROUBLE!

BY MY SOUL!!
THEY DROP SEEMINGLY OUT OF NOWHERE, A COUNTLESS HORDE OF CLAWING, BITING, CHITTERING...THINGS...
...AND, IN THE SPACE OF A HEARTBEAT, CARYTH IS OVER-WHELMED.
CARYTH!
CAN'T LET 'EM GET A GRIP ON ME--THEIR MANDIBLES ARE RAZOR-SHARP! WISH I HAD THAT DAMN HELMET!
CARYTH!!
ZAK!
RELAX, BOYO--I'M NOT DEAD YET!
THESE ARE VARIATIONS OF THE LIFE-FORM THAT ALMOST KILLED PETER. I THOUGHT IT WAS A PRIMI-TIVE BEING...
...YET I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT THIS HORDE'S ATTACK-ING US WITH PURPOSE AND DIRECTION!
THIS IS INSANE. MY UNIFORM'S TOUGHER THAN STEEL AND THESE BUG-THINGIES ARE RIPPING IT TO SHREDS, YET CARYTH ISN'T EVEN SCRATCHED!
I HOPE I'M THAT INVUL-NERABLE WHEN THEY STRIP ME NAKED.
WE HAVEN'T A PRAYER IN THE OPEN--GOTTA FIND COVER. OR A PLACE WE CAN DEFEND.
CARYTH, HEAD FOR THE MOUND!!

THEY HAVE TO FIGHT EACH STEP OF THE WAY, AND IT SEEMS THAT, FOR EVERY DUNE DEVIL THEY PUT OUT OF ACTION, TWENTY MORE ARRIVE TO TAKE ITS PLACE.
AND THE CLOSER THEY GET TO THE MOUND, THE MORE FRANTIC THE ATTACKS BECOME.
A MIRACLE HAS KEPT THEM ALIVE THUS FAR, BUT EVEN MIRACLES HAVE THEIR LIMITS.
STAR-LORD AND CARYTH DESPERATELY ATTEMPT TO LAY TWIN ARCS OF BLASTER FIRE AROUND THE MOUND--STAR-LORD TRYING HIS BEST TO REMAIN TRUE TO HIS CREDO: THAT, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, HE WILL NOT KILL.
ALL THEY MANAGE TO DO IS BUY THEMSELVES A FEW SECONDS' GRACE, BUT BEFORE THEY MAKE ANY SORT OF MOVE, THEY'RE SWAMPED BY A FORCE OF WINGED, SNAKE-LIKE MONSTROSITIES.
SUDDENLY, SHE FINDS SHE'S WEEPING WITH A FURY SHE NEVER KNEW EXISTED IN HER. SHE HAS THE POWER, THE INVULNERABILITY, TO BREAK FREE OF THIS NIGHTMARE.
BUT SHE ALSO KNOWS THAT IF SHE TRIES, STAR-LORD WILL BE CUT TO RIBBONS BEFORE THEY'VE GONE TEN FEET. THEY'RE DEAD IF THEY TRY ANYTHING, AND DEAD IF THEY DON'T.

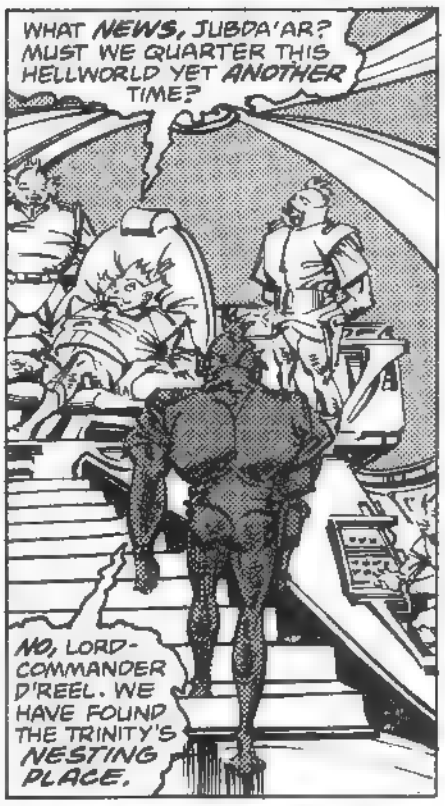
WEAPON MODES OF EARTH, AIR AND FIRE HAD NO EFFECT. ONLY WATER IS LEFT.
THE BUG-UGLIES ARE ACCLIMATED TO THEIR DESERT WORLD. A SHOT OF WATER MAY BE MORE THAN THEY CAN HANDLE.
AT LEAST A FLASH FLOOD OUGHT TO SLOW 'EM DOWN.
DAMN!
ONE OF 'EM SNAGGED MY ARM!
MY SHOT'S GOING IN-TO THE MOUND!
IMAGINE THE ESSENCE OF SOUND: PURE, SINGULAR, UNIQUE--AND ENCOMPASSING EVERY HARMONIC SHADE AND VARIATION IN EXIS-TENCE.
AND, AT THE SAME TIME, IMAGINE THE ESSENCE OF LIGHT--EVERY CON-CEIVABLE COLOR OF THE SPECTRUM WASHING THROUGH MIND AND BODY AND SOUL...
...TWISTING THEM INSIDE-OUT-- YET CAUSING NO HARM.
IMAGINE EVERY EMOTION POSSIBLE FOR A LIVING BEING TO FEEL, ALL JUMBLE-BANGED TO-GETHER AND THEN LIT FROM WITHIN BY A JOY SO PURE AND ELEMENTAL IT HURTS.
IMAGINE...CREATION. IN ALL ITS GLORY. BECAUSE --THOUGH STAR-LORD AND CARYTH DON'T REALIZE IT YET--CREATION IS WHAT THIS IS.

IT--IT'S OVER. I'M... WHOLE AGAIN.
WHAT... THE HELL IS HAPPENING HERE?!
CARYTH? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
THAT QUESTION NO LONGER HAS MEANING, PETER. AFTER AN EXPERIENCE LIKE THIS, BEING MERELY "ALL RIGHT" IS A LITTLE AKIN TO BEING DEAD.
IN ALL MY... AWARENESS, I'VE KNOWN NOTHING TO COMPARE WITH THIS
PETER, LOOK.
THE HORDE-- IT'S MOVING BACK!
CARYTH, THOSE CHITTERING NOISES THEY MAKE--THEY'RE NOT RANDOM SOUNDS, THEY'RE A LANGUAGE.
THESE... BUG-THINGS ARE A SENTIENT RACE!
I'LL TRY TO LISTEN... CONCENTRATE... MAYBE I CAN MAKE SOME SENSE OUT OF THEIR BABBLE...
ALL I GET ARE A SUCCESSION OF IMAGES, REPEATED LIKE A PRAYER-- SAVIOR, CORE, HEART, SOUL, DEATH, BIRTH, LIFE...
THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT THE MOUND.
THEY MAY HAVE BACKED OFF, BUT THEY'RE NOT GOING AWAY. WE'RE STILL TRAPPED.
I KNOW. KEEP AN EYE ON 'EM, CARYTH.
I'M GOING TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE MOUND, SEE IF I CAN FIND ANY CLUES TO ALL THIS.

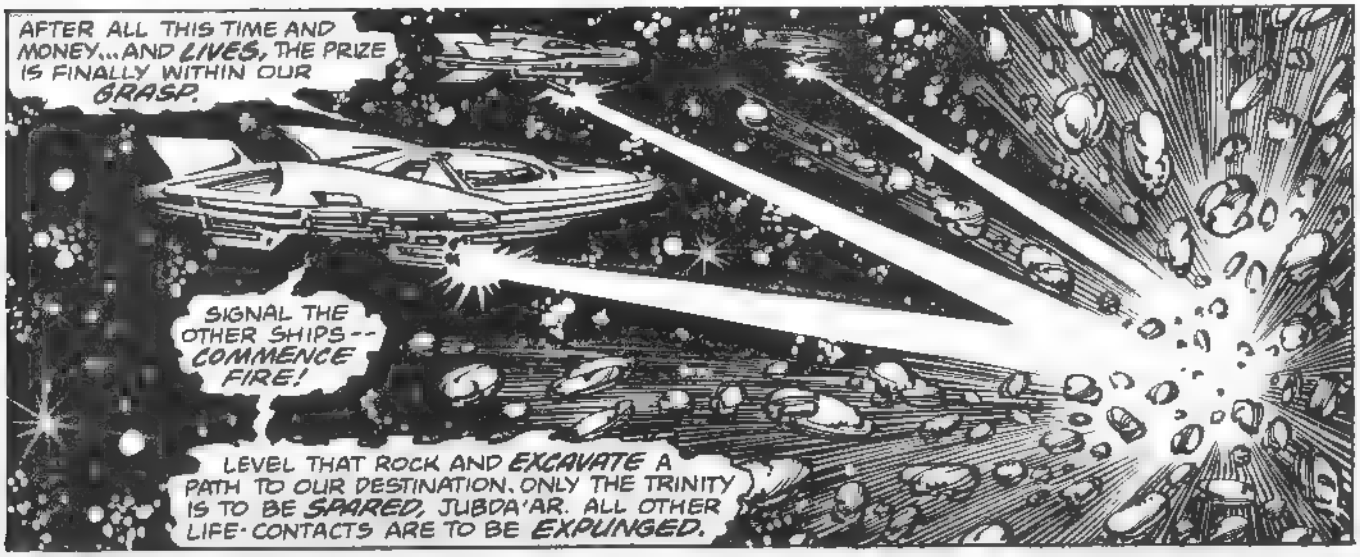
I WISH I FELT AS CONFIDENT AS THAT SOUNDS. THE BEST I CAN DO IS MATE THEIR IMAGES TO THE CLOSEST ENGLISH ANALOGUE, THEIR CONCEPTS INTO A HUMAN FRAME OF REFERENCE.
SOMETIMES, THOUGH, THERE AREN'T ANY.
HMMMMM.
CARYTH, CHECK THE GROUND WHERE MY WATER BLAST HIT. IS IT. WET?
DRY AS A BONE, PETER. THERE'S NOT EVEN A RESIDUAL TRACE.
HAVE YOU FOUND SOMETHING?
MAYBE. THE CAVE FLOOR BEHIND THE MOUND IS DAMP.
BUT WE'VE SEEN HOW ABSORBENT FERROL'S SOIL IS. TO SATURATE EVEN A SMALL PART OF IT WOULD REQUIRE... I DUNNO, AN OCEAN?
AND WHY ONLY HERE?
IT'S LIKE A PICTURE PUZZLE...
...ONLY ALL THE PIECES ARE MISS!-- WHAT?!?
ANOTHER EARTH TREMOR-- A BIG ONE!
IMPOSSIBLE. I SCANNED THIS ENTIRE PLANET BEFORE WE--I--CRASHED. THIS MESA--THE DESERT AROUND IT--IS TECHTONICALLY STABLE. THAT MEANS NO EARTHQUAKES.
NO NATURAL 'QUAKES. REMEMBER THOSE STARSHIPS BLASTING THE DESERT. WHATEVER THEY'RE AFTER, THEY WANT IT BADLY ENOUGH, TO RIP THIS PLANET APART...

"...AND I KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THEY'VE GOT THE POWER TO DO IT."
THREE MILES ABOVE THEIR HEADS, THE CROWN OF THE MESA GLOWS LIKE A ROMAN CANDLE, ITS TOP THOUSAND FEET VAPORIZED BY THE LORQ DREADNOUGHTS.
THE STRIKE FORCE HOVERS NEARBY, THE FINEST WAR-MACHINES EVER SEEN IN THIS PART OF THE GALAXY, STRAINING AT THEIR COLLECTIVE LEASH LIKE PREDATORS WHO'VE FINALLY FOUND THEIR PREY AND ARE EAGER FOR THE KILL.

ABOARD THE FLAGSHIP, FEW OF THE COMMAND CADRE BOTHER TO HIDE THEIR EXCITEMENT...
SENSOR REPORT ON-SCREEN, JUBDA'AR.
FINALLY, I'LL TAKE A COPY TO D'REEL.


WHAT NEWS, JUBDA'AR? MUST WE QUARTER THIS HELLWORLD YET ANOTHER TIME?
NO, LORD-COMMANDER D'REEL. WE HAVE FOUND THE TRINITY'S NESTING PLACE.

IT LIES THREE SHIP-LENGTHS BELOW THE ROCK FORMATION.
AND OUR BIO-SCANNERS INDICATE THE TRINITY ITSELF IS STILL LOCKED IN BIRTH-STASIS.
EXCELLENT, JUBDA'AR.


AFTER ALL THIS TIME AND MONEY...AND LIVES, THE PRIZE IS FINALLY WITHIN OUR GRASP.
SIGNAL THE OTHER SHIPS--COMMENCE FIRE!
LEVEL THAT ROCK AND EXCAVATE A PATH TO OUR DESTINATION. ONLY THE TRINITY IS TO BE SPARED, JUBDA'AR. ALL OTHER LIFE-CONTACTS ARE TO BE EXPUNGED.

MEANWHILE, IN THE CATHEDRAL CAVE...
WE'VE LEARNED AS MUCH AS WE'LL EVER LEARN BY OBSERVATION ALONE. I'M GOING TO TRY AN EXPERIMENT.
STAND BEHIND ME, CARYTH. I'M GIVING THE MOUND ANOTHER SHOT OF WATER.
THIS REACTION, IF POSSIBLE, ECLIPSES THE FIRST AS THE CAVERN EXPLODES IN A PSYCHIC SYMPHONY THAT HAMMERS STAR-LORD AND CARYTH OFF THEIR FEET.
AGAIN, TIME STANDS STILL, AND THE TWO OF THEM ARE ENVELOPED IN A DISPLAY OF SENSORIAL FIRE WORKS THAT TOUCHES THEM TO THE DEPTHS OF THEIR SOULS.
AND THEN, IT'S OVER--LEAVING BOTH STAR-LORD AND CARYTH SO DRAINED THEY CAN BARELY STAND.
WHAT--HAPPENED?!?
MY SYSTEMS... ALMOST NONFUNCTIONAL. SENSORS INDICATE PETER ISN'T MUCH BETTER. THAT ENERGY FIELD PUNCHED THROUGH MY PERSONAL SHIELDS LIKE THEY DIDN'T EXIST!
PETER! THE BUG-THINGS--THEY'RE DYING!
GOD FORGIVE ME, WHAT HAVE I DONE?!?
I SWORE WHEN I BECAME STAR-LORD THAT I WAS DONE WITH KILLING.
THAT OATH'S JUST BECOME THE BIGGEST JOKE IN HISTORY.
UNLESS... THE JOKE'S ON ME.
CARYTH, LOOK! BUGS--THOUSANDS OF THEM, CRAWLING TOWARDS US OVER THE BODIES OF THEIR DEAD.
THE NOISE THEY'RE ALL MAKING--I KNOW THIS SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT I THINK IT'S SOME KIND OF SONG!
A SONG OF... JOY.
STAR-LORD, THE MOUND IS GLOWING.
THAT'S NOT ALL, CARYTH. THE GLOW IS PULSING TO THE BUGS' SONG, SHIFTING IN INTENSITY WITH EACH SHIFT IN TONE OR VOLUME.

PETER, BE CAREFUL...!
I'M NOT WORRIED. DESPITE ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, I THINK THE BUGS--AND WHATEVER'S IN THE MOUND --MEAN US NO HARM.
IT'S CALLING ME, CARYTH--JUST LIKE IT DID IN SPACE, DESPERATE FOR MY HELP.
I CAN'T REFUSE IT. WE'VE GOT TO TRY TO COMMUNICATE.
ARE YOU GETTING ANYTHING?
DON'T KNOW--SO HARD TO TRANSPOSE ...ITS CONCEPTS INTO ENGLISH. IT'S...TRYING TO REACH ME, THOUGH. I CAN FEEL IT.
SUCH CHAOS IN ITS MIND--THINGS AREN'T RIGHT. IT'S NEVER KNOWN FEAR, YET IT'S...AFRAID.
IT CALLS ITSELF THE TRINITY-THAT-IS-ONE--BOTH CHILD OF THE BUG-RACE AND PARENT TO IT. THIS IS...INCREDIBLE.
INSIDE THE MOUND... DIFFERENT LIFE-FORM THAN THE BUGS, A SYMBIOTE, SHARING FERROL WITH THEM. TO BE BORN, IT ABSORBS THEIR LIFE-FORCES--
--AND THEN, BEFORE ITS OWN DEATH, THE TRINITY GIVES BIRTH TO A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF BUGS.

NEITHER CAN LIVE AND EVOLVE WITHOUT THE OTHER. SOMEHOW, THOUGH, THE TRINITY'S CYCLE HAS BEEN DISRUPTED. IT WAS LOCKED IN STASIS TILL I ACCIDENTALLY BLASTED THE MOUND.
FHLASSH!
IT NEEDS WATER TO SUPPORT ITS BIRTH--DAMN NEAR AN OCEAN OF IT. WITHOUT THAT WATER, IT'LL DIE--AND THIS WORLD WITH IT.
I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN.

I TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS, PETER, BUT HOW LONG CAN YOU KEEP THIS UP? TRUE, THE POWER OF YOUR WEAPON IS LIMITED ONLY BY THE STRENGTH OF YOUR WILL...
...BUT IN YOUR WEAKENED CONDITION, PROVIDING THE WATER THE MOUND NEEDS MAY WELL KILL YOU.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE REPTILE STARSHIPS..?

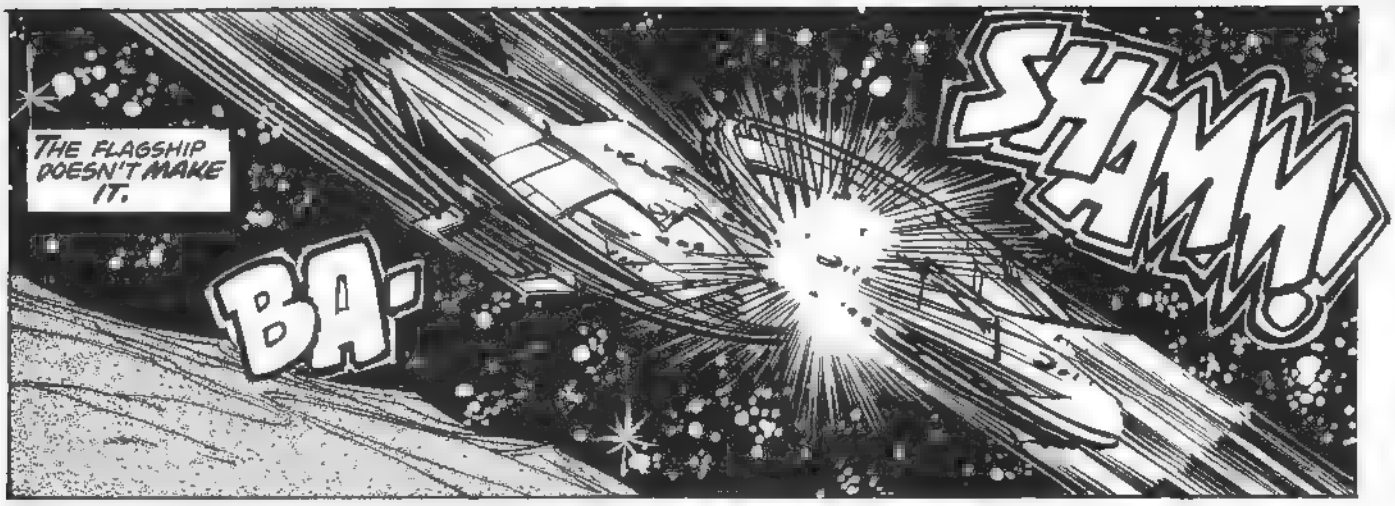
"YOU'LL NEED A HELLUVA LOT OF TIME TO FINISH THIS, M'LOVE. WILL THEY GIVE IT TO YOU?"
ON FERROL'S PLANETARY SURFACE, WHERE TRINITY MESA ONCE STOOD PROUD AND TALL, THAT ANSWER'S BECOMING OBVIOUS.
TREMORS--COMING ALMOST CONTINUOUSLY!
IT HAS TO BE THOSE STARSHIPS. THEY'RE BURNING THEIR WAY DOWN TO US!
AGAIN AND AGAIN, ENERGY BEAMS LASH OUT AT THE DESERT...
...SEARING THE GROUND WITH HEAT THAT WOULD PUT A STAR TO SHAME AS THE DREADNOUGHTS GOUGE A MONSTROUS HOLE OUT OF THE LANDSCAPE.
IN THE CATHEDRAL CAVERN, CARYTH WATCHES, TRANSFIXED WITH HORROR, AS THE CRYSTAL ROOF CRACKS--THEN BEGINS TO SHATTER!
CARYTH--LOOK OUT, WOMAN!
ALL THAT BEAUTY--LOST FOREVER!
PETER, WE'VE GOT TO GO. YOU'LL NEVER FINISH BEFORE THE STARSHIPS ARRIVE. AND IF YOU STAY, YOU'LL DIE.
IF I GO, A WORLD DIES. I WON'T HAVE THAT ON MY CONSCIENCE. THE MAIN TUNNELS ARE STILL CLEAR--SAVE YOURSELF, CARYTH. I'LL FOLLOW WHEN I CAN.
I UNDERSTAND, STAR-LORD. IF I DIDN'T, I'D SLING YOU OVER MY SHOULDER AND CARRY YOU TO SAFETY.
I KNOW IT'S RIGHT TO RUN, BUT IT STILL DOESN'T MAKE ME FEEL ANY BETTER.

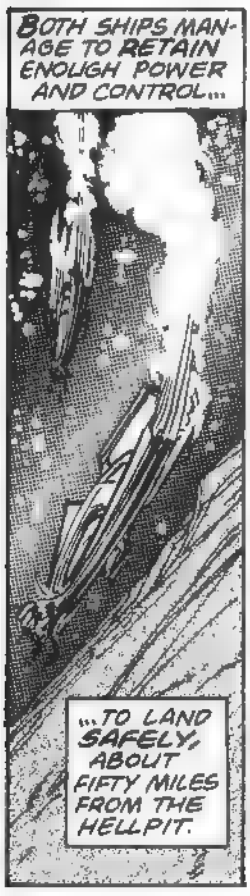
ALONE AGAINST THAT TASK FORCE, PETER, YOU WON'T HAVE A PRAYER.
BUT WHEN YOU FACE THEM, YOU WON'T BE ALONE.
THIS TUNNEL SHOULD BRING ME UP ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE MESA FROM THE STARSHIPS...
OHHHH, NO! THE MESA--! THEY'VE TURNED IT INTO A HELLPIT.
AT LEAST THE HEAT AND RADIATION WILL MASK ME FROM THEIR SENSORS.
HAVE TO MOVE FAST.
THEY'RE WAITING FOR THE PIT TO COOL BEFORE STARTING THEIR FINAL ASSAULT.
DAMN THEM, WHOEVER THEY ARE!
IF THIS WORLD ISN'T TO THEIR LIKING, WHY DON'T THEY JUST LEAVE IT?!
WHY DIDN'T THEY LEAVE ME AND PETER BE?!
THERE'S THE SHIP-- THE OTHER PART OF ME--
--AS BATTERED AS THE PLANET SHE'S ABOUT TO TRY TO SAVE.
I'M STILL BADLY HURT. I'LL HAVE TO STRETCH MY LIFE-FORCE PRETTY THIN TO COMPENSATE FOR INJURIES.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I CAN GET OFF THE GROUND, LET ALONE FIGHT.
SURPRISE, SURPRISE! WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?
MUSTN'T FOOL MYSELF, THOUGH. ONE SOLID HIT AND I'VE HAD IT.
THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO TELL PETER, SO MUCH I WANT TO LEARN WITH HIM. SO MUCH...THAT I MAY NEVER GET TO DO.

AT THAT MOMENT, OVER THE HORIZON...
ROOF'S COLLAPSING! ROCKFALL'S BURYING THE MOUND!
I HOPE THE TRINITY GOT ENOUGH WATER, 'CAUSE I'VE A NASTY FEELING THAT'S ALL IT'S GOING TO GET!
HERE THEY COME!
PIT'S LIKE A MONTANA STRIP MINE--
--BIG ENOUGH TO FIT ALL THREE SHIPS AND GIVE 'EM SOME ROOM TO MANEUVER AS WELL.
BETTER PLAY THIS FAST AND LOOSE! AND HOPE I'M TOO SMALL A TARGET FOR THEM TO TRA--
--AARRGH!!
KVRAK!
STAR-LORD!
BY MY SOUL, IF HE'S HURT--!?!
THE BEAMS THREW HIM TO THE BASE OF THE PIT--MY SENSORS CAN'T MARK HIM IN ALL THAT CLUTTER!
"SHIP" MOVES AMONG HER FOES LIKE A DEMON WRAITH...
...ALWAYS SOMEWHERE ELSE WHEN THE LORQ ANSWER HER DEADLY ACCURATE VOLLEYS WITH INEFFECTUAL POT-SHOTS.
SHE HAS THE ADVANTAGE AND USES IT FOR ALL IT'S WORTH.
ONE DOWN! MY TARGET'S INTACT, BUT HIS MAIN DRIVE'S CRIPPLED. HE'LL HAVE BARELY ENOUGH POWER TO BOOST INTO ORBIT, AND NONE TO SPARE FOR COMBAT.

THE LORQ GET HEIGHT ON HER AND HIT FROM OPPOSITE SIDES, RAKING HER WITH A MURDEROUS SUCCESSION OF BLASTER BEAMS AND NUCLEAR MISSILES.
BUT THE ODDS ARE STILL TWO TO ONE...
...AND EVEN "SHIP'S" LUCK CAN'T LAST FOR-EVER.
SOMEHOW, THOUGH, SHE BREAKS FREE AND TRIES TO RUN, THE LORQ FOLLOWING CLOSE BE-HIND.
NO!
"SHIP," YOU'VE GOT NO MORE SHIELDS, EVERYTHING THEY'RE THROWING AT YOU IS HITTING HOME.
SHE CLEARS THE LIP OF THE HELLPIT BY A FEW FEET, BUT THAT'S THE BEST SHE CAN DO.
HER STRING'S RUN OUT. SHE'S MORTALLY WOUNDED, STAY-ING ALOFT BY SHEER FORCE OF WILL.
FINALLY, SHE HITS. STAR-LORD DOUBLES OVER IN AGONY AS HIS EMPATHIC RAPPORT WITH "SHIP" ECHOES HER PAIN.
BUT HE SENSES THAT SHE'S KEEPING MOST OF IT TO HERSELF, TRYING TO SPARE HIM AS MUCH PAIN AS POSSIBLE.
SHE HITS AGAIN, THE IMPACT HURLING CARYTH HALYAN FROM THE COMMAND SPHERE...
...AND, ALL OF A SUDDEN, IT'S AS IF THE HEART AND SOUL HAVE GONE OUT OF "SHIP."
SHE NO LONGER TRIES TO STAY AIRBORNE, NO LONGER FIGHTS FOR LIFE. A MOMENT LATER, IT'S ALL OVER.

"SHIP--?!?"
"SHIP!!!"
WHAT--?! THAT LIGHT--?!
AN ALIEN! SOUND INTRUDER ALERT!
QUICKLY, FOOL-- SUMMON WARRIORS!
TOO LATE, FISH-FACE. BY THE TIME YOUR GOONS ARRIVE, YOUR SHIP'LL BE AS DEAD AS MINE.
FZZT!
I'VE SLAGGED THEIR WARP DRIVE. BEFORE THEY CAN MAKE ANY REPAIRS, THEIR FUEL ELEMENTS WILL HAVE DEGENERATED TO INERT MATTER.
IT'LL BE YEARS BEFORE THIS HULK WILL BE OPERATIONAL AGAIN-- IF EVER.
STOP HIM--
UNNNGNH!
KRAK!
STOP ME, MISTER?
YOU COULD SOONER STOP DEATH ITSELF!
THIS NEUTRALIZES ALL THEIR COMMAND SYSTEMS. WITH THEIR PRIME COMPUTER IN MY HANDS--
--THEIR SHIP IS MINE.
STAR-LORD PRESSES A BUTTON, AND THE DREADNOUGHT'S FUNCTIONAL ENGINES FIRE FULL POWER, DROPPING HER LIKE A STONE TOWARDS THE HELLPIT...
...AND THE LORD FLAGSHIP DESPERATELY TRYING TO CLIMB OUT OF HER WAY.


THE FLAGSHIP DOESN'T MAKE IT.
BA-
SHAAM!!


BOTH SHIPS MANAGE TO RETAIN ENOUGH POWER AND CONTROL...
...TO LAND SAFELY, ABOUT FIFTY MILES FROM THE HELLPIT.

DAMAGE CONTROL, JUBDA'AR--FULL REPORTS, ALL SECTIONS, IMMEDIATELY!
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, LORQ.

I CAN TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT'S WRONG.
WHO--WHO ARE, ALIEN?
I'M CALLED STAR-LORD AND YOU?
I AM LORD-COMMANDER D'REEL.

YOUR TASK FORCE IS BEATEN, D'REEL. YOU'VE ONE SHIP WITH ORBITAL CAPACITY, THE REST ARE JUST SO MANY MEGATONS OF JUNK.
ALL YOUR COMPUTER, POWER AND WEAPONRY SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN NEUTRALIZED. YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE ARE HELPLESS.

HOW--DARE YOU?!? WE ARE ON STATE BUSINESS; WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO INTERFERE?!
WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO EXTERMINATE A SENTIENT LIFE-FORM? THE TRINITY IS NO THREAT TO YOU. IT'S DONE YOU NO HARM. YET YOU WOULD HAVE DESTROYED IT.
I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T, D'REEL, BECAUSE--UNTIL YOU CAN SUMMON RESCUE--YOUR SURVIVAL MAY DEPEND UPON MAKING PEACE WITH IT.

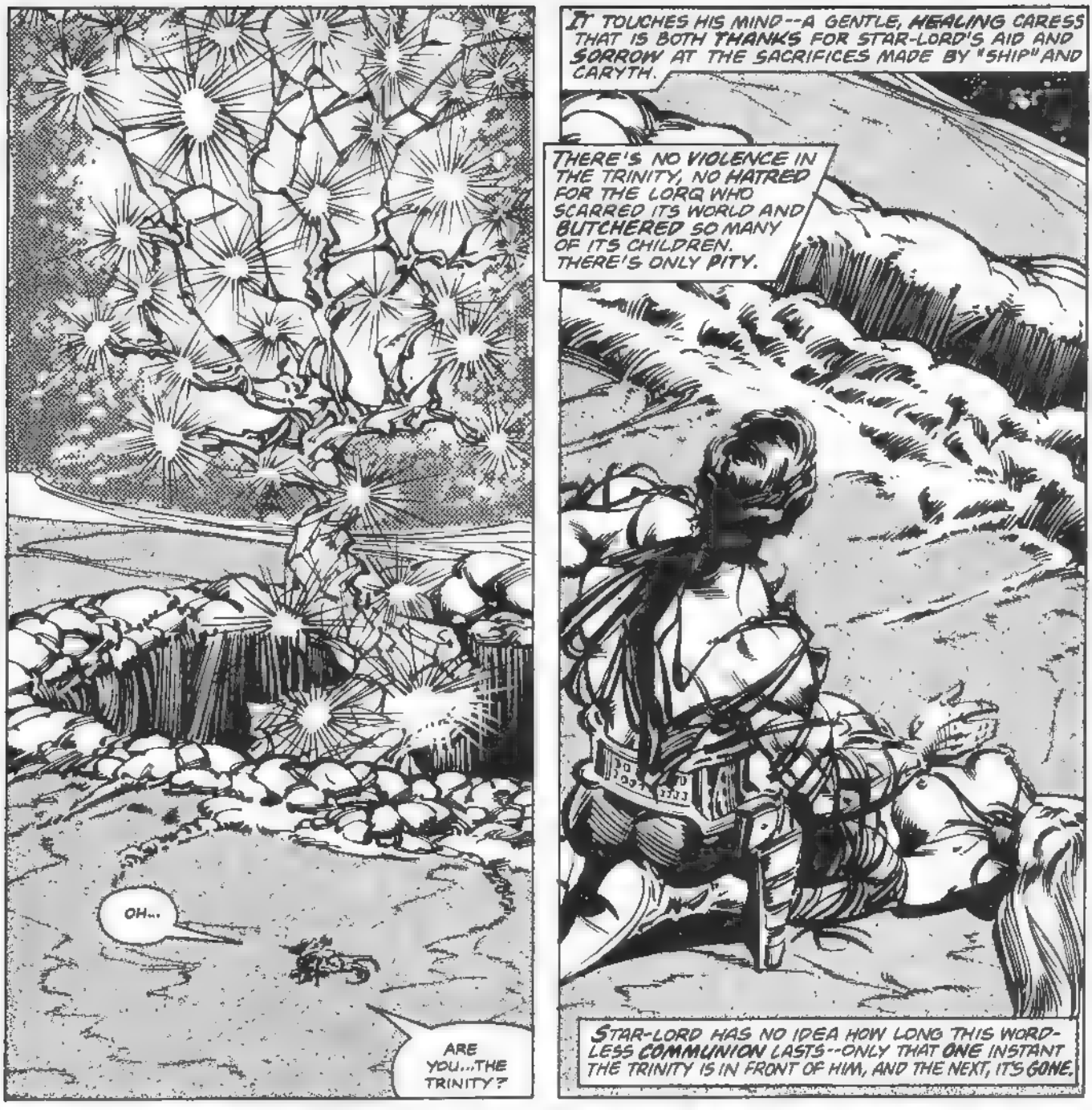
...I THINK THINGS ARE GOING TO BE OKAY. THE LORQ COULD STILL WIN HERE, BUT D'REEL DECIDED VICTORY WASN'T WORTH THE COST.
CARYTH, WHAT CAN I DO?
STAY... WITH ME.
I DO NOT FEAR...WHAT YOU CALL DEATH, PETER, ONLY...BEING ALONE. I'D BEEN ALONE SO... LONG TILL I MET YOU.
DON'T TRY TO TALK.
BEING SILENT...WILL NOT HELP ME. THE PAIN IS...GONE. I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING.
PETER, HAVE I...TOUCHED YOU...? IN YOUR...HEART?

HER RIGHT HAND BRUSHES HIS BELT AND, UNNOTICED BY STAR-LORD, THE METAL GLOWS FOR AN INSTANT.

THEN, THE GLOW FADES AND CARYTH LIES STILL.
NO.
I NEVER WANTED TO BE TOUCHED.
IF NO ONE'S PRECIOUS TO YOU, YOU CAN'T HURT WHEN YOU LOSE THEM.

IN ALL HIS LIFE--EVEN ON THE NIGHT HIS MOTHER WAS MURDERED BEFORE HIS EYES--PETER QUILL HAS NEVER CRIED. BUT HE CRIES NOW.

HE FEELS EMOTIONS HE'S DENIED SINCE HE WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD, FOR A WOMAN --AND A COMPANION--HE NEVER GAVE HIMSELF A CHANCE TO KNOW...WHOSE TRUE VALUE HE NEVER PERCEIVED UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.
HE GRIEVES.
TIME PASSES, AND THEN...
THE HELL-PIT--IT'S GLOWING!
FROM THE SOUND OF IT, SOMETHING'S MOVING DOWN THERE. SOMETHING BIG.


OH...
ARE YOU...THE TRINITY?
IT TOUCHES HIS MIND--A GENTLE, HEALING CARESS THAT IS BOTH THANKS FOR STAR-LORD'S AID AND SORROW AT THE SACRIFICES MADE BY "SHIP" AND CARYTH.
THERE'S NO VIOLENCE IN THE TRINITY, NO HATRED FOR THE LORD WHO SCARRED ITS WORLD AND BUTCHERED SO MANY OF ITS CHILDREN. THERE'S ONLY PITY.
STAR-LORD HAS NO IDEA HOW LONG THIS WORDLESS COMMUNION LASTS--ONLY THAT ONE INSTANT THE TRINITY IS IN FRONT OF HIM, AND THE NEXT, IT'S GONE.

AND HE IS FINALLY ALONE.
HE KNOWS A WORLD AND ITS PEOPLE WERE SAVED TODAY. HE KNOWS WHAT HE FEELS IS SELFISH--BUT HE'S HUMAN AND HE CAN'T HELP IT AND, IN THE END, HE DOESN'T REALLY CARE.
THE TRINITY WAS SAVED, BUT FOR PETER QUILL, THE COST IS MORE THAN HE CAN BEAR.

LATER...
...I CAN GO TWO WAYS NOW, CARYTH. I CAN SHRIVEL UP INTO THE EMOTIONAL CRIPPLE--THE HALF-MAN--I USED TO BE. PART OF ME WANTS TO. IT'D BE EASY TO GIVE IN.
PETER QUILL, STAR-LORD, UNTOUCHED. UNTOUCHABLE.
OR I CAN... BECOME WHOLE. TOUCH AND BE TOUCHED. I CAN REACH OUT, ACCEPTING THE RISK OF BEING HURT FOR THE...JOY, I HOPE, OF BEING LOVED.
I CAN PERHAPS, AFTER ALL THESE WASTED YEARS, TRULY START TO LIVE.
HAH?!?
MY BELT--! WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON HERE?!
BEFORE HIS STARTLED, DISBELIEVING EYES, THE GLOW EXPLODES AWAY FROM HIM, TAKES ON A RECOGNIZABLE SHAPE...
...AND THEN SOLIDIFIES AROUND HIM INTO REALITY.
BUT--HOW?!? YOU WERE DESTROYED BY THE LORQ! I SAW YOU CRASH!
HIYA, HOTSHOT. MISS ME?
"SHIP"--?!?
PETER, MY LOVE, MY PRIMAL STATE OF BEING IS ENERGY. IN A SENSE, I CAN NEVER BE DESTROYED.
MY CONSCIOUSNESS, THOUGH, CAN BE SO DISRUPTED--WELL, IT'S AS NEAR TO DEATH AS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE.
WHEN THE LORQ BEAMS ALMOST DID THAT, I SHIFTED MY "SELF" INTO CARYTH'S FORM, AND THEN INTO YOUR BELT.
I'D BE THERE NOW IF THE TRINITY HADN'T HEALED ME WHEN IT DID YOU. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, I FEEL PRETTY GOOD.
YOU WERE CARYTH, WEREN'T YOU, "SHIP"?
I WAS. ARE YOU ANGRY AT THE DECEPTION?
NO, TO TELL THE TRUTH, I FEEL KIND OF FOOLISH, AND VERY, VERY YOUNG...
BUSTER, I'VE GOT ABOUT A BILLION YEARS ON YOU, AN' MOST OF THE TIME I FEEL LIKE I'VE JUST BEEN BORN.
LONG AS WE GROW UP TOGETHER, I'M NOT COMPLAINING.

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OTHER WORLDS
OTHER WOMEN
OTHER WORLDS
OTHER WOMEN

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JANET AULISIO

Three Kinds of Fannish Encounters

By Don & Maggie Thompson

If you bought this magazine, you are already a fan—of comics or science fiction or both—but there are degrees of fannishness.

The first stage of fannishness is reading, but the true fan goes beyond that to reading *about* comics or science fiction and then on to the third kind—contact with other fans.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a fan as "An ardent devotee or admirer, as of a sport, athletic team, or famous person." We are going to discuss science fiction fans and it might help to keep in mind that "fan" is derived from "fanatic."

We are often asked how to "get into" fandom. All you have to do is involve yourself in it—there is no membership card, no entrance examination, no diploma. All you have to do is belong.

You belong by indulging in your fan activity, and there are lots of kinds of fan activity.

The first step is reading and then—as usually happens—collecting. Collecting starts by keeping the books and magazines you especially enjoyed, for the purpose of rereading them. Often this progresses to the point where you collect the trappings of science fiction—all the magazines or all the paperback books or all the works by a favorite author. In some extreme cases, you collect *everything* related to science fiction: magazines, books, movie posters, articles and bubblegum cards. Collecting can involve the indexing of items in your collection and storage in protective coverings to prevent damages.

The reader does not always become the collector and the collector is not necessarily obsessed with collecting, but even obsessive collecting is frequent.

The purpose of being a fan is to have fun. Fandom is, after all, a hobby. Science fiction fans enjoy reading, writing and talking about their hobby, and this is the second stage of fannishness: communicating with other fans.

Fandom started when science fiction magazines began printing letters from the readers. Readers wrote to each other as well as to the magazine, and friendships (and enmities) began.

Fans began printing fan magazines—"fanzines" for short—in which they expressed their views on science fiction and on other topics as well. They also tried their hands at writing stories, articles and editorials in their fanzines—and at doing artwork. Then they traded fanzines with other fans.

Some of the fanzines are mimeographed or spirit-duplicated or done offset. A few are done on Xerox or other copiers. Most fans start out by using a copier available to them at school, church or office. Those with a long-range publishing goal hire printers or invest in mimeographs or other printing machines of their own. This can be very expensive.

As a matter of fact, with postage and paper costs constantly climbing, the publishing of fanzines has become a costly project. Our recommendation is that you start by reading other people's fanzines and contributing letters, articles, stories or artwork to them—at least until you have a fuller idea of what is involved.

Fanzines come and fanzines go, but a few seem destined and determined to go on forever. We will recommend three long-running, widely circulated fanzines, of different types. From these, you can learn about other fanzines which might interest you.

Locus is subtitled "The Newspaper of the Science Fiction Field," a very accurate description. It is published more or less monthly by Locus Publications, Post Office Box 3938, San Francisco, Cal. 94119. Single copies are $1 but you really should subscribe for a year to get its full flavor and benefits; a year's subscription is $9.

Charles N. Brown is the editor, and *Locus* publicizes news of magazines, books, people, conventions, fanzines and anything else of interest in science fiction.

If you only subscribe to one fanzine, it should be *Locus*; from there you can move on to other fanzines of your choice.

Algol (subtitled "The Magazine About Science Fiction") is in its 15th year and is published three times a year. Where *Locus* looks like a small newspaper, *Algol* is a slick-paper magazine of professional quality. Editor Andy Porter has regular book reviews and columns by such science fiction writers as Richard Lupoff and

Frederik Pohl and frequent articles by such other writers as Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Subscriptions to *Algol* are $4.50 per year, at Post Office Box 4175, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Where *Locus* offers news and *Algol* gives deeper articles about writers and their work, our third recommendation is a publication of intense debate and discussions of the field and the people in it, often on a very personal level.

Tempers often flare, resulting in an exciting and informal view of the field in *Science Fiction Review*, edited and primarily written by Richard E. Geis.

Geis' editorial comments are woven between articles, columns and book reviews by contributors, some of whom are top science fiction writers (a word of caution: *Science Fiction Review* should be considered R-rated because the strong opinions are sometimes accompanied by strong language). You can get a sample of the current issue for $1.50 or get four quarterly issues for $4 from Post Office Box 11408, Portland, Ore. 97211.

From fanzines, you are ready for the next big step, to the third kind of fannishness—direct contact with other fans.

Science fiction fans have a strong urge to get together at conventions to discuss their hobboes and other interests, to sing songs they have composed about SF, to attend speeches and panel discussions by professional writers and artists and editors and to meet and talk with these pros—and to exhibit outstanding art by fans.

It is a good idea to start by attending a small regional convention in your area (*Locus* will keep you well posted on what is coming up along these lines). It is easier to make acquaintances at a small gathering than at the annual World Science Fiction Convention, where the newcomer is apt to be lost in the thousands of convention attendees. After you have made some friends at a regional convention, by all means attend a world convention, but it is overwhelming and expensive and we really don't advise starting with a worldcon.

One parting piece of advice: Avoid using the ugly and obsolete phrase "sci-fi." Many fans and writers *detest* the term and it is a good way to turn people off. Harlan Ellison, once a fan and now one of the field's best and most successful writers, has compared use of the term to calling black people "coloreds."

"Sci-fi" is used only by people who know nothing of science fiction—moviemakers, editors of *Playboy*, editors of monster fan magazines. Call it SF or even science fiction and you will offend no one, not even the people who call it "sci-fi."

After all, if you are trying to communicate with someone, it is not a good idea to make offense at the outset.

And don't feel uneasy about being a newcomer (neofan); we all started as newcomers and became old-timers just by staying around. And we stayed because we enjoy it.

So if you see us at a convention, come up and say "Hi." But not "sci-fi."

$5.00

19 Different Drawings.

Adult Theme.

A PORTFOLIO BY VAUGHN F. BODĒ

THE BODĒ BROADS

THE BODĒ COLLECTION ★ ITEM №2

1. HI, IM YOUR NEW SPACE PERM BANK!
2. I GOT TO GET BAYONETTED REAL SOON.
3. MY NAME IS MOUTH.
4. OH, DIS IS COLD! I WISH I HAD YOUR HOT ROCKS TO SIT ON!
5. I LET DE WIND BLOW ME.
6. I AM FAIRY MEAT.
7. GRANDMOTHER
8. BIG MAMA SEZ: I LIKE TO EAT BIRDS.
9. YOU GONNA LIKE MY COCKPIT.
10. I NEED A JOCKEY
11. AH SO, MAYBE YOU LIKE TO PUT YER YIN IN MY YANG, YES?
12. OOH, I GOT A HEART-ON FOR YOU!
13. HEY, TOO BAD HE NOT A HORN-NOSE!
14. YOU WANT TO BLOW MY BUBBLES?
15. MY SISTER, SHE LIKE TO CHEW BONES!
16. SOMEBODY GOT TO HELP ME UNFREEZE MY POPSICLE
17. COME WITH ME, BIG BOY.
18. SOK-A-DUK
19. IT'S TIME TO BLOW THE BOMB

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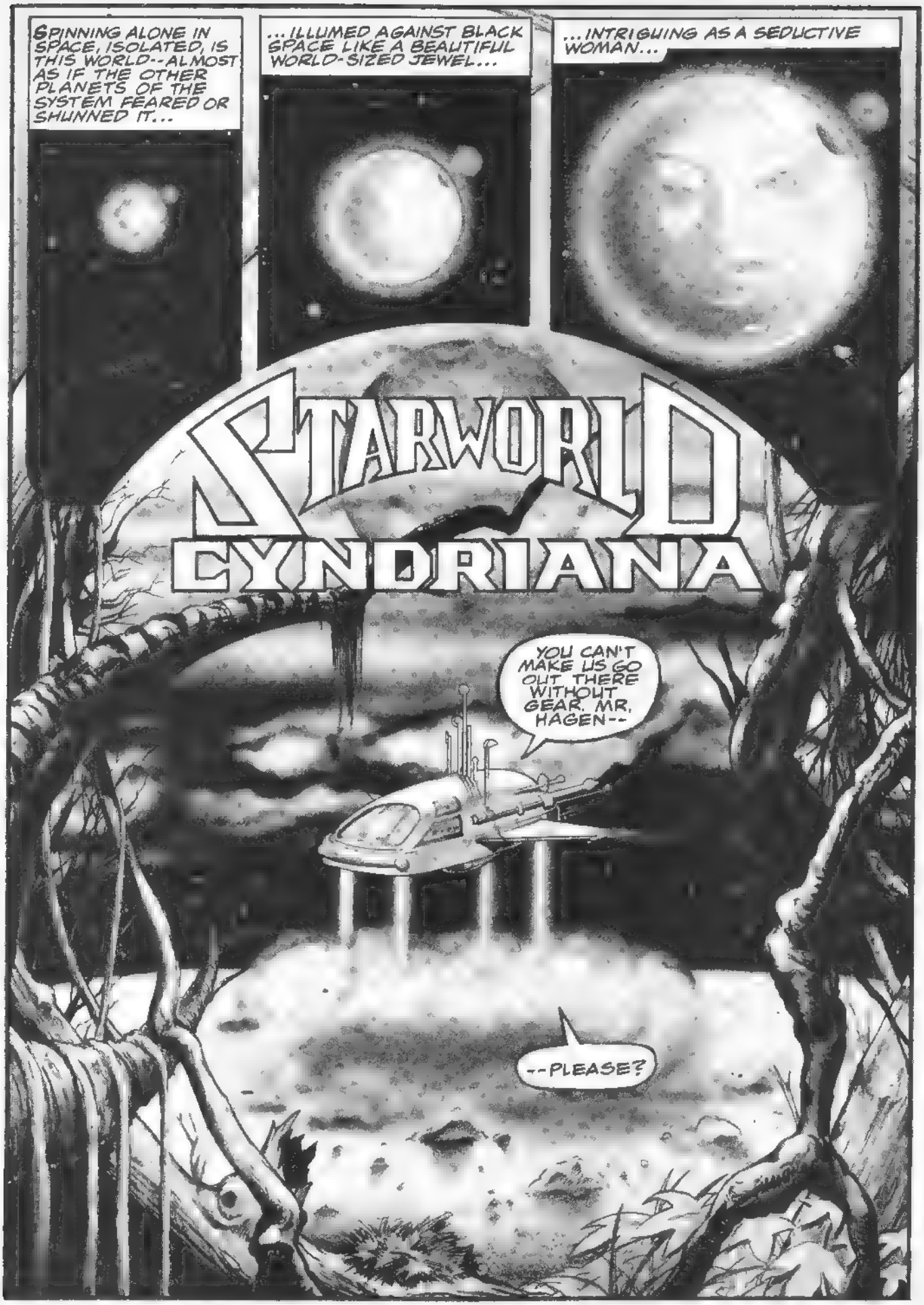
SPINNING ALONE IN SPACE, ISOLATED, IS THIS WORLD--ALMOST AS IF THE OTHER PLANETS OF THE SYSTEM FEARED OR SHUNNED IT...
...ILLUMED AGAINST BLACK SPACE LIKE A BEAUTIFUL WORLD-SIZED JEWEL...
...INTRIGUING AS A SEDUCTIVE WOMAN...
STARWORLD
CYNDRIANA
YOU CAN'T MAKE US GO OUT THERE WITHOUT GEAR, MR. HAGEN--
--PLEASE?

 Script: David Kraft Art: Bob Wakelin

DON'T... BEG, LEIGH. HIS KIND ARE DEAF.
GET OFF THE SHIP.
OH!
URRGGH!
THE AIR-- IT'S NOT RIGHT.
HE CAN'T BREATHE.
KEEP MOVING.
AAARRGHH!!
ALEX!

NNOO-O!
KZZOLT!
THE CRYPT-LIKE SILENCE OF THE BARREN PLANET IS AGAIN BROKEN BY THE DEADLY BUZZING OF THE WEAPON. LEIGH FALLS...
THIS OUGHT TA BE WORTH QUITE A LOT.
I WON'T BE NEEDING THIS BIT OF FORGERY ANYMORE!
SPACECRAFT PILOT LICENCE
DURBAN HAGEN
PRIVATE PILOT & GOVERNMENT CHAUFFEUR
... AND IS RELIEVED OF A SHINY BAUBLE.
I'LL GATHER UP THE VALUABLES IN THE SHIP, CACHE THEM HERE...
... DITCH THIS RIG IN SPACE AND RETURN IN MY OWN SHIP TO COLLECT THE GOODIES.

BEST PLACE TO STASH THE STUFF WOULD BE IN THE JUNGLE, WHERE I CAN FIND IT, MAYBE NEAR A TREE...
THIS LOOKS LIKE A GOOD ENOUGH PLACE...
GARNET CLIVE, I AM CYNDRIANA.

WHA--? HOW'D YOU KNOW MY NAME?
IT IS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE. WE ARE HERE...
LET US COME TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE... IN THE JUNGLE...
...DRESSED LIKE THIS...
WAITING FOR...
...ME?
SUDDENLY, AS IF BREATHING HER BREATH, CLIVE ACCLIMATES TO THE SURROUNDINGS...
SURROUND-INGS THAT...
...SUR-ROUND...

SHE PURRS IN SOFT TONES OF PURE SENSUALITY:
I HAVE BEEN LONELY. AND I HAVE WAITED... SO LONG... FOR SOMEONE TO COME.
YOU SPEAK AS IF YOU WERE... PART OF THE PLANET ITSELF...
IT'S NOT NATURAL TO FIND A WOMAN IN THE JUNGLES OF...
...A SHUNNED PLANET... THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG!
WHA--??

GOTTA ESCAPE THIS DAMNED PLANET--
--IT'S GREEDY FOR ME!
ENTRAPMENT! THE CLAWING ENVIRONMENT SEEKS TO BIND CLIVE AT EVERY TURN!
THUD!
HIS OBSESSION, BORNE OF THE FRANTIC URGE TO SURVIVE, IS TO RETURN TO THE SHIP.
JUST BARELY DOES HE ESCAPE THE MALE-VOLENT FORCES AROUND HIM...
UNTIL HE IS REUNITED WITH LEIGH...

THE GIRL... IN THE JUNGLE... SHE ALMOST GOT ME!
SHE MUST BE THE SPIRIT OF THIS PLANET ...AND NOW... IT WANTS TO KEEP ME HERE!
ONE FINAL EFFORT IS MADE TO ESCAPE HIS FATE...
OR... HIS JUDGMENT!

SOON, ALL IS QUIET AGAIN ON THE ISOLATED GLOBE. NOTHING IS CHANGED-- BUT FOR SOME NEW LITTER ON THE FORBIDDING LANDSCAPE...

INCLUDING A GLITTERING TRINKET, SO CRUELLY LUSTED AFTER...
AND PROCURED --EVEN FOR SO SHORT A TIME-- AT SUCH A HIGH PRICE.

Letters

It's due to start soon, folks! The Marvel oversized editions are about to go further than they ever have before, with the kind of stories and art that only these special magazines can deliver. We have fantastic new directions in mind, including genres and projections that have never been attempted in this field; but that doesn't mean that we will abandon the many characters that you have come to love in these past years. Many of those endearing, and less than endearing personalities will return, with blood transfusions and personality transfusions, all given courtesy of some of the most talented writers and artists in the Marvel Bullpen.

This is a special trip, and you're about to embark on it.

You'll read more about our exuberant plans in the editorial sections of upcoming Marvel b&w magazines. The recently released CLOSE ENCOUNTERS full-color magazine, and the upcoming BEATLES full color phantasmagoria will give you a slight indication of the spectacular efforts and directions we have planned for the future.

Be with us, please.

Remember, we're nothing without you. We need your criticisms, pro and con, and your support. We need your voices. We need to know when we reach in and touch you, move you, make you laugh, or terrify you. It's your letters that keep us in touch, that move *us*, that sometimes causes us to burst into laughter, and sometimes, admittedly, cringe in terror.

Now let's see what's shakin' with you folks...

Dear Bullpen,

I wish to express my unqualified enthusiasm for the story, "Picture of Andrea" published in your trial issue of *Haunt of Horror* in issue #12 of MARVEL PREVIEW.

The blending of Sonny Trinidad's truly sinister art with Doug Moench's well thought out script was superbly done. It was one of the few really convincing and genuinely frightening vampire stories I have ever read, in graphic form or novel. Moench got around the difficulties of vampire story cliches ingeniously, what with his usage of the detective employing crossed swizzle sticks to hold the vampire girl at bay, and with his sardonic references to "all the corny Late Show flicks". These were good touches that made the entire story believable.

I felt that the presentation of Count Dracula was a masterfully done bit of characterization. Bram Stoker would have loved it. the combination of sensuality and unbelievable cruelty of the vampire was flawlessly captured in those stunning panels on pages 47-50.

The difficulty with a magazine like this is to prevent horror from degenerating into sheer grossness and bad taste. I think you have managed quite well in presenting stories that had impact without violating the reader's sensibilities, as so often happens with this kind of magazine.

Michael L. Raymond
St. Paul, MN

Is that bad taste anything like good taste in tuna, Charlie?

Never mind. We were only kidding, Mike. Or perhaps that was only a momentary lapse into sheer grossness.

Actually, your point is well taken. The horror genre is a difficult endeavor in both art and text. The characters must be real people that are caught in terrifying circumstances, and not merely caricatures for endless blood-letting. We're glad you think we've accomplished the mood and pace of true horror. It's what we wanted to accomplish.

Dear Roger Slifer & Company,

I sincerely hope that you are able to get the new horror black & white magazine off the ground. I have been a fan of the Marvel b & w line-up since you began publishing it. I have always felt that Marvel advanced the comic horror story genre.

I know all about the competition you have in the field. Warren Magazines has published horror and monster books for more than a decade, yet their material is virtually all the same type of storylines. I am also aware of National Comics childish stabs at the horror genre. You could not compare these efforts, in my mind, with the brilliance of TOMB OF DRACULA, DR. STRANGE, and MAN-THING. I feel that if Marvel limited itself to one b & w horror title, instead of, say, a half dozen, that one would survive.

I strongly suggest that this one title consist of both old and new characters. I would like to see a SON OF SATAN/SATANA series, a new b&w MAN-THING series, and WEREWOLF BY NIGHT (with Jack Russell saved from his super-hero schtick) as interesting series possibilities. LILITH/MORBIUS, DR. STRANGE, and a few adaptations from H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard and Burroughs are other suggestions. I'd also like to see a science-fantasy series in the b&w magazines, and a WAR OF THE WORLDS with KILLRAVEN would fit nicely (by McGregor and an artist of your choice) into this area.

I feel that the b&w magazines have a lot of potential for introducing new ideals and new characters, and that Marvel has let this potential grow stagnant.

Mark Ryan
10236 Monarch Drive
St. Louis, MO 63136

Mark, we've got the best blamed news in the world for you, because just what you're *asking* us for is exactly what we're about to *give* you.

Right now, even as we speak (where've we heard that before), Marvel is about to begin a new horror title. Tentatively, the book has been titled SATANA; but this is a whole *new* SATANA, unlike anything that has gone before. Nearly the whole Bullpen brain-trust has been brought into consultation on how to make the new SATANA one of the most dynamic magazine concepts in our history. And not only is it a new magazine, this Satana is an entirely *different character*, taking only the name from the satanic sweetheart you've known in the past. Sound intriguing? We thought so.

While Don McGregor won't be back doing KILLRAVEN for awhile, (and he wouldn't consider doing it without Craig Russell, his longtime compatriot) he *will* be returning in the SATANA spectacular, resurrecting another favorite, this one from VAMPIRE TALES #2. That's right people. That erudite sleuth, *Hodiah Twist* will appear in the long-awaited "The Hero-Killer Principle", promised many moons ago in the late, lamented VAMPIRE TALES. Hodiah returns (with his faithful companion Jeavons, natch) to board one of the last elevated trains to run in New York City during the 1930's, for a hair-raising episode that will leave you white with terror. And taking the ride with them are a mind-boggling cast of characters straight out of Agatha Christie—with the kind of unexpected twists that would do the first lady of detective fiction proud. Watch for it.

As for MAN-THING...would-ja believe that he, too, is scheduled to come sloshing your way, (either in SATANA or the pages of our all-new, full-color HULK MAGAZINE) written by the gentleman whose bizarre imagination catapulted ol' Manny to the very apex of our color horror line in the past —Steve (Baby) Gerber! Almost too good to be true, ain't it people. And the murk-dweller's comeback is due largely to the overwhelming response his solo outing garnered from all of you in RAMPAGING HULK #7. Man-Thing and we thank you kindly for the write-in votes.

But here's the very best news of all...

Our new SATANA mag is going to be in (hold onto your hats) fabulous FULL-COLOR! Yep. Under the editorial aegis of our new Special Projects Department's editors, Rick Marschall and Ralph Macchio, a whole new brand of full-color excitement will be blasting in your direction in just a few short months. This time, you *really* ain't seen nothing yet.

Dear Roger,

MARVEL PREVIEW #12 was only a fair issue and certainly not of the quality we've all come to expect from Marvel's black and white line, although I feel it's high time Marvel got a horror book out on the market again.

To tell the truth, I feel it's high time Marvel expanded its black and white line in general.

Certainly, I would like to see, say, a STAR-LORD black and white magazine with a *Sword In The Star* back-up feature. There are other characters I would like to see get their own books, but you receive plenty of suggestions like that, so I need not go through my own list of favorites. No, my suggestion is a bit more radical than that

Why not give two totally different characters shared billing in a b&w magazine, giving each of them a 25 page story. Marvel did something similar to this in the old color comic STRANGE TALES, featuring both DR. STRANGE and NICK FURY, AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.

You could rotate the characters of such a book so that one issue would lead-off with one of the strips, alternating with the other in the next as the lead. Some examples of this kind of pairing would be a SATANA/KILLRAVEN book, SILVER SURFER /PUNISHER; THOR/SHERLOCK HOLMES; DR. STRANGE/ MAN-THING; well, you get the idea.

Peace.

James Anthony Aube
26 East Brookline St.
Boston, MA 02118

Mr. A., those are some weird combinations you came up with, we'll give you that.

If you haven't read your letter first (we wouldn't blame you if you did, understand) you'll already know about the SATANA book we have planned, but the diligent Mr. Marschall also has a science fiction book on tap, featuring *STAR-LORD*, and he has writers and artists geared to begin work on it in the near future. As with the beforementioned SATANA, this SF book will have full color pages, and will feature some of the most stunning and intriguing ideas to be presented in any comic magazine ever.

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DETOUR

Script: Rick Marschall Art: Alfredo Alcala

Home for the holidays. Well, not quite home yet. There's still ... three, maybe four hours on the interstate — depending on traffic and other things. Other things like coffee stops and visits to the comfort stations. Without all this coffee, she theorizes, I could save time on the other stops. But without coffee I'd be driving in my sleep.

Cathy Bailey was becoming pretty philosophical over a simple thing like which rest area to visit. But she had a right to be on two counts: it was almost 2:30 in the morning, and the driver's mind needs something to keep it busy. Also, she was now a college girl, a philosophy major, and supposed to be developing an analytic mind.

Big deal, anyhow, she thought; I'm thirsty. She pulled into the exit between the reflector-dotted signs. She was anxious to see the family on this, her first vacation from college, and talk about her new friends, her dorm, the teachers, and her cherished project, just approved by Dr. Peterkin, to investigate witnesses' reactions to UFOs.

But the family won't be awake when she gets home anyway, so there's no need to hurry. They were to expect her any time over the weekend, and in fact she's a half-day earlier than she'd hoped..This night driving wasn't too bad, really; the roads are emptier and one can pick up radio stations from over half the country. That makes the solitude and darkness easier to endure.

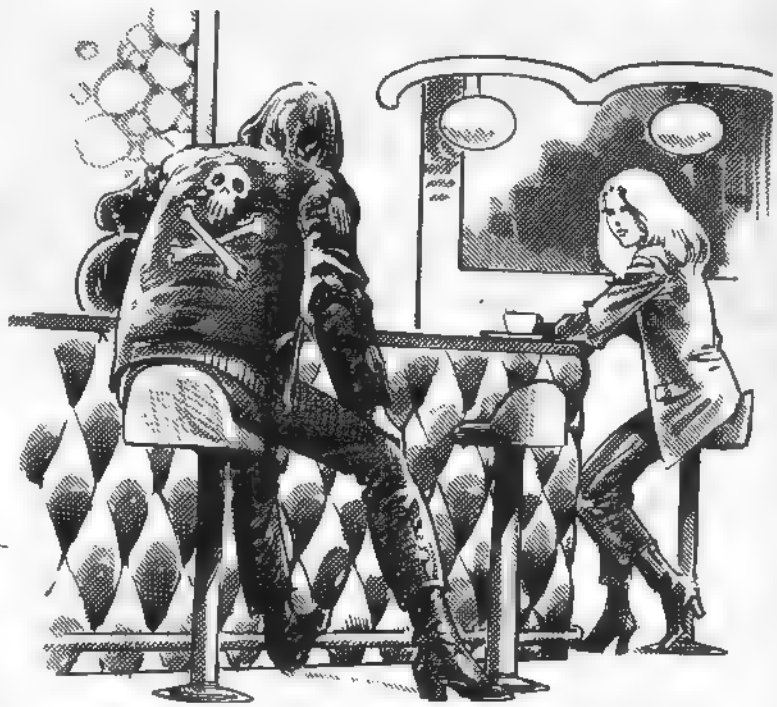
One cup of coffee, black, was stronger than she was used to, but she couldn't afford to risk drowsiness alone at night on a big interstate.

As Cathy sat in near solitude at the counter, another night rider straggled in, in search of the same stimulant. The motorcycle rider — what else could he be in that leather jacket and helmet? — sat himself down a couple of seats away. His coffee came, he took a few loud sips, and then opened a conversation with Cathy.

It was just small talk; just where are you headed and how long have you been riding, probably — you forget stuff like that a second after it's said. To Cathy, a human voice, even a stranger's, was a welcome change from five hours of announcers' radio static.

But she soon sensed that small talk was becoming long talk, and when the rider moved to the seat next to her, she figured she'd just as soon be going. But he was insistent on talking longer ... on having them sit in her car for awhile ... that she be "less unfriendly."

Cathy fumbled for a single to leave on the counter but could only come up with a two-dollar bill. That was a small price to pay, she thought, for a quick exit. She practically trotted out of the coffee shop, leaving the bike rider with a half-filled cup and suggestions still on his lips.



Cathy pulled her second-hand import out onto the highway. The screeching tires in combination with the almost-shot muffler made it sound like a pit start at a stock-car race, but who could be bothered by the noise way out here? Besides, it felt good to get away from that creep as fast and decidedly as possible.

The little bit of unpleasantness, more than the coffee, rallied her senses and woke Cathy up. Now she could settle in for the final stretch home. She reached for the radio again to play the game with herself to see the farthest city she could pick up this time of the dark early-morning.

Suddenly—had she been on the road mere minutes or half an hour?—she became aware of a light behind her. Not lights. Light. Was it a car with a broken headlight?

No, it was a motorcycle.

Her stomach felt a little funny, then a lot funnier when the rider got close and blinked his lights.

He was *very* close, blinking his lights constantly.

The road seemed to get much darker, Cathy thought, and the radio was no longer an antidote for loneliness.

She accelerated, but every time he just did the same. When she applied the brakes, he slowed down or pulled closer to the side of the car. The broken muffler seemed to make a deafening noise as Cathy progressively grew frantic over this: Should she have been nicer to him? Should she have ignored him from the start? Had he been following her all night? Maybe from campus?

The term "cold sweat" was an instant, sickening reality to Cathy Bailey as this bizarre chase gathered intensity on the lonely interstate.

Her hands gripped the wheel as if they tried to squeeze something out of the hard plastic. Her eyes frantically darted around the front seat — as if something could help her in this nightmare. She looked up, and the light was gone from the mirror, blinding her no more. Was he gone as fast as he came?

Shockingly, in the side window, so close he could grab the girl if the window were open, he appeared. His face was grimacing, contorted in a frenzied, pleading, menacing expression. He was obviously shouting — loudly, hysterically — but his bike and her engine made those obviously revolting words superfluous.

Then, in an instant, he shot ahead to cut her off by veering to the right in front of her. Cathy tapped her brakes and cut to the left. In her mirror she saw that he was spinning and spilling, having lost control of his cursed mount. Her sudden cut and frantic pace had her not much better as she swayed over the road.

Off to the side, across the road shoulder, was a field, a farmer's field, and lights in the distance. Whether they were from a farmhouse or little street that led somewhere, no matter: she was riding halfway through the cornfield, committed. If she could hide, there was comfort — her beat-up wreck could never outpace the big bike on the open road.

She bounced a while longer, then came to rest near a high cluster of bushes. Spinning in her seat to every direction in search of the dreaded cyclops light, and not seeing it, she cut her noisy engine.

It should have become quiet, but it didn't; the radio was still blasting some scratchy mixture of country-Western and Spanish music from two cities God knows where. God. As she turned the radio off, she prayed a frantic prayer, as sincere in its split-second as any marathon Sunday morning in church back home.

All was quiet except for her seemingly deafening heartbeat — another cliche given new, horrified meaning. Cathy's breast heaved, her temples throbbed and goosebumps raced over her whole self.

Then it came, like a vicious monster with the taste of blood, over the horizon — roaring, almost whining, leaping in mid-air over broken cornstalks, bearing down on her.

How did he find me???

Cathy started the car instantly and screeched forward. She screamed. And cried. Please, please, please, she sobbed ... to her pursuer, to Providence, to her car ...

In this last bit of haste, her car failed her — or, rather, Cathy did herself in. She didn't hit the headlights. In this ugly, moonless night she and her old car were lurching blindly, only catching flashes of what was in front of them, ironically, when the motorcycle close behind illuminated some swatch of land or trees.

Cathy fumbled for the light switch and started the wind-shield wipers. She pounded the dashboard in angry disgust and clawed blindly for another switch — which half an hour ago she calmly could have found with her eyes closed.

Her eyes were closed now in another sense. Cathy was nearly blind with fear, lunging rapidly ahead into total darkness, just concerned with getting away, getting *away*!

Finally the inevitable happened. Cathy's car collided with — something; a tree, a fence, a telegraph pole, whatever. It was over. She was stopped, stuck, trapped.

And there, running towards the car, was the Mad Conversationalist, with a crowbar or some kind of tool, still shouting, screaming.

Lock the doors!!!

Cathy hadn't done that, but she now commanded some small bit of reason and composure and slammed the two buttons down. Was that better than running?

The horn! It didn't work — smashed by the impact.

This instant analysis was interrupted by the realization that the rider was about to smash her window in. By his expression, Cathy thought he could have sent the whole car reeling.

She dove to the floor.

She expected a crash, but it was more like a crunch as the auto glass broke. Fragments showered over her uncontrollably shaking body.

He grabbed her — in her terrorized, near-comatose state, she couldn't tell where; it seemed everywhere — and pulled her from the car. Half of her struggled, half was frozen with fear.

What Cathy then saw stopped all the sobbing, stopped the heavy breathing, seemed to stop her very blood from rushing. They both stood transfixed, no longer attacker and prey, but as a stone statue, both supporting —*needing* — each other.

For there, directly over the roof of her car, was a strange, alien, vessel, bobbing in mid-air silently. It was a shiny metal sphere with a few metallic warts on it, all glowing slightly. And quietly: it seemed to absorb the sound all around them.

That's what I saw and tried to tell you about on the road, the rider breathed hoarsely. Cathy was still transfixed in a weird mixture of physical exhaustion, emotional drain ... and overwhelming curiosity.

Before anything else, though, the floating sphere silently glided a bit upwards, emitted a sound (or a light, or a feeling) that suggested anger to the two awed humans, and directed two intense, cool white beams at the car and the motorcycle, on its side a few feet away.

As quickly and as quietly as that was done, the vehicles disappeared. And just as quickly the orb shot away upwards — instantly enveloped in the darkness and the silence of the night.

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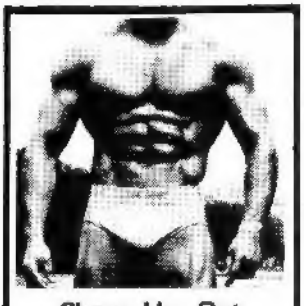

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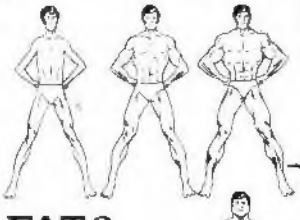

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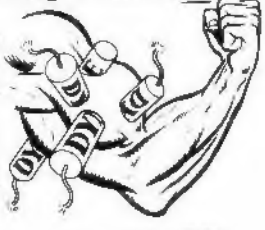

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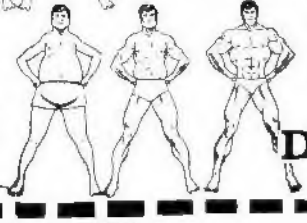

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